

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

Date: Tuesday 30th November, 2021
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: Virtual meeting

Please note this is a virtual meeting.

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

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest
To receive any declarations of interest.
3. Minutes- Corporate Parenting Board- 19 October 2021 5 - 16
4. Participation of Children and Young People- Participation People 17 - 20
Hannah Wiseman, Programme Manager - Specialist and Targeted will provide an update to the Board.
5. Covid 19- UPDATE
The Director of Children's Services will provide a verbal update to the Board.
6. Middlesbrough Children's Services- Virtual School- Interim Annual Report 2020/ 21 21 - 32

Victoria Banks, Head of Virtual Schools, will present the Interim Annual Report 2020/ 21.

7. Independent Visitor report to Children's Homes (Regulation 44 visits) 33 - 40

Paul Rudd, Head of Service- Future for Families will present the key themes from the Regulation 44 visits.

8. Fostering report- Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 41 - 52

Paul Rudd, Head of Service, Future for Families will provide the Board with information on Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 Fostering data.

9. Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 53 - 74

Siobhan Davies, Principal Social Worker & Service Manager will present the IRO Annual report to the Board.

10. South Tees Youth Offending Service 75 - 90

Kay Dargue, Manager - Head of Partnerships will provide a presentation in relation to South Tees Youth Offending Services.

11. Performance against Corporate Parenting Strategy

The Director of Children's Care will provide an update on the Performance Scorecard.

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
Monday 22 November 2021

MEMBERSHIP

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

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

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CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on Tuesday 19 October 2021.

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

PRESENT BY INVITATION:

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

OFFICERS: S Blood, S Butcher, T Dunn, P Jemson, J Russell, C Snowball, D Fenny and S Lightwing

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors C Wright, M Saunders, V Banks, R Brown, R Farnham, T Parkinson, P Rudd, R Scott, B Cooper and A Preston (The Mayor)

21/11 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Prior to the Apologies for Absence, the Chair welcomed the Members and officers to the Corporate Parenting Board to the meeting. The Chair shared a story regarding the importance of being a Corporate Parent and our duty to all children and especially children looked after.

21/12 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following members declared an interest:

Councillor	Type of interest	Reason
A Hellaoui	Non Pecuniary	School Governor
T Higgins	Non Pecuniary	School Governor

21/13 **MINUTES- CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD - 14 SEPTEMBER 2021 AND ACTION PLAN**

21/14 **ADOPTION TEES VALLEY- ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21**

The Board welcome Vicky- Davison Boyd, Service Manager from Adoption Tees Valley (ATV) who was in attendance to provide the Adoption Tees Valley Annual report 2020-21.

This Annual Report covered the period of 1.4.20 - 31.3.2021.

The Board were well aware that this period had been impacted by Covid-19 and the Service Manager advised that the year reported on has been characterised by adoption activity which has been conducted within the amended regulations and restrictions that have been imposed because of the public health emergency. One aspect that the ATV used was the ability to move adoptive parents onto Stage 2 of the adoption process without the medicals/ DBS being returned due to delays. However the Board were assured that no adoptive parents were approved without a medical or a DBS. Medicals were carried out by doctors/ medical advisors be that virtually.

In the main, despite some members being absent, Adoption Panels were held (virtually) and no adopters were approved without being presented to Panel; to ensure the quality assurance mechanism set in place.

The Service Manager stated that ATV continued to work in partnership with all 5 local authorities; however initially at the beginning of April 2020, moves for children to adoption placements were put on hold due to the virus and its health implications.

ATV worked closely with the National Adoption Agency National system and quite quickly looked at safe measures to move children on if that had been matched and not to have further unnecessary delay unduly by the pandemic. ATV operated a national risk assessment system (taking into account all issues associated with the pandemic) and there was excellent work undertaken by social workers; children services staff etc and these have been proven by the outcomes of some of the work undertaken in the year.

In terms of children being adopted, in the Tees Valley there were 82 children placed for adoption, but there were a further 17 children have been placed for early permanence, not yet "placed for adoption".

In terms of Courts, they were very closely with ATV and heard adoption hearings, be that through challenging circumstances and there were 89 children adopted in the year.

Key developments

The Service Manager advised that ATV had devised the Early Permanence Strategy; which set out to offer more opportunity for children to be cared for by their likely permanent family, at an earlier stage in their lives. This has been achieved through fostering for adoption, where the child's plan is well developed before the Placement Order is granted, enabling a transparent, well planned placement, which reduces moves for children, and enables vital bonding and attachment with those likely to become parents to the child, at an earlier stage.

This was slightly affected by Covid, however this was put back on track and training was delivered to all 5 local authorities children's services. ATV met with senior Managers and legal teams and key teams. Due to this we are seeing more children being moved onto early permanence.

In the latter part of the year, ATV worked on their moving onto adoption model which is a national researched programme and have begun to pilot in ATV and used in specific cases. Foster carers and adopters get to know each other better and all the focus is supporting the child with continued foster carer contact even when placed.

In terms of Middlesbrough's performance, the Manager outlined that there had been some excellent work and one thing that was really embedded was the permanence monitoring group, which was tightly managed and this enabled a close track of all children with a permanence plan and particularly an adoption plan. The Permanence Monitoring group was chaired by Paula Jemson and attended my members of ATV and plans are done in a timely way and if there are any delays, these problems are resolved.

In terms of Middlesbrough's numbers for 2020-21, there were:

- 25 Children adopted (compared to 16 in 2019-20) and there are several sibling groups.
- This year, there have been 10 children adopted
- 24 placements
- Timescales for children being adopted has improved in Middlesbrough, it was

over 500 days from being looked after to moving in with adopters in 2019-20, but last year the average figure of 385 days.

- Increase in older children coming through for adoption

The Service Manager congratulated children's services for their performance, but advised further improvement could be made, however ATV work closely with Middlesbrough to ensure the service continues to improve; however there has been vast improvement in terms of adoption and early permanence.

In terms of training, ATV have been involved in the programme for social workers, and ATV have been thrilled by the number of newly qualified social workers coming through and being able to have in depth discussion.

Following the presentation, the Board congratulated the service for the number of children and especially older children being adopted.

A Board member queried whether there was any update regarding the number of diverse groups seeking to become adoptive parents. The Service Manager advised that ATV had reached out to recruit to diverse communities and there had been a small increase- 3 families were currently coming through assessment. In terms of children from ethnic minority backgrounds, there are several, and it was hoped that they would be able to be placed with ethnic minority families if suitable. The Board learnt that there was no one prevalent ethnic background as most children from tended to be dual heritage.

The Head of Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting further added that to date Middlesbrough had secured:

- 14 adoption orders , with a further 2 hopefully being granted an order.
- 32 children who are subject to adoption orders; with 2 children not looked to adoptors.

Of those 32 children:

- 7 single children
- 5 sibling groups of 2
- 5 from ethnic minorities
- 6 children with significant health and additional needs
- 7 children over the age of 4 years old.

The Director of Children's Services further wanted to stress that these improvements had been made during covid and social workers and the regional adoption agency has been working differently. Middlesbrough should be proud of the way it has performed during this period. She also outlined that she had the pleasure of being the adoption decision maker for Middlesbrough and was passionate about how our children find their forever home.

Lastly , the foster carer in attendance advised that historically, foster carers had little to do with the selection of foster carers and queried whether this could be developed. In terms of foster carer involvement, ATV have started to involve foster carers more in the meeting of prospective adopters, however the selection process was for social workers however should take into account feedback from foster carers; in terms of matching and selection and foster carers should have the opportunity to meet adopters and share stories or the child/ren. The Service Manager also outlined to the Board that it was National Adoption week and any support would be welcome.

The Chair thanked the service manager for her presentation and input.

AGREED- That the presentation be noted.

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

Schools were operating as business as usual, however there are still covid cases in some schools, however in the main they were managing; however the impact on covid on school staffing was variable.

In terms of children's social work, Middlesbrough has returned to working with children and young people as per pre covid, and there is significant work being undertaken to move social workers safely back into Middlesbrough House.

In terms of covid vaccines, the Head of Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting advised that there were 125 children who fitted the eligibility category and the programme was being led by the school immunisation team. Update was slow but it was being promoted. The Council had been working with the schools immunisation team and discussion had taken place with children, young people and foster carers to ensure all information was shared and that they could make an informed choice.

AGREED- That the update be noted.

21/16 **PARTICIPATION WITH OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Chair welcome Hannah Wiseman, Programme Manager- Specialist and Targeted from Participation People to the meeting.

At the last meeting of the Board, the Chief Executive provided the Board with an overview of the Participation Roadmap for Middlesbrough as well as working closely with the children in care council and care leavers forum.

At present, the focus was on Care leavers week and the Participation People with Care leavers were undertaking some training with elected members to provide information of what it was like to be a child in care. The training would be 1 hour. Workshops surrounding young people's wellbeing were also being developed and would run throughout November.

In terms of further work, the Participation People would work and consult with young people to see what they want in Middlesbrough and in the pipeline, was Middlesbrough Takeover to solve Middlesbrough's big business challenges.

Further updates would be delivered at every meeting of the Board.

AGREED- That the update be noted.

21/17 **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD STRATEGY ACTION PLAN- REVIEW OF THE SUFFICIENCY ACTION PLAN**

The Chair welcomed the Specialist Commissioning & Procurement Senior Manager to the meeting to provide an overview of the highlight report of the Sufficiency action plan were was devised out the corporate Parenting Board Strategy.

The 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 Sufficiency action plan was broken up into 6 themed areas, with a key accountable officer who works closely with the Manager.

The Manager provided an overview of the key progress to date against each them and these are bulleted below:

Theme 1 - Strengthening Commissioning for Children and Young People

- Work has commenced on the introduction of Controcc in to Children's in order to bring efficiencies in payment processes and strengthen our demand modelling already achieved in Adults.
- Middlesbrough Council held an Independent Fostering Agency Provider Event in June 2021 which was very well attended.

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

- Partner in Practice work was undertaken with in-house fostering and has been put on hold as a business case for internal change has been submitted for approval.
- Regional work on future procurement of a regional framework continues and the commissioning model has been received and circulated internally for review.
- Internal unregulated provision opened and is actively being used with 7 young people currently being supported.
- Rosecroft Children's Home has re-opened with an increase in beds to 5 and now specifically offering support to young people aged 16+ in order to support move on to independence.
- Continue to work with the region in order to identify any opportunities for collaboration. Currently awaiting set up of a regional commissioning hub.

Theme 3 – Growing Early Intervention & Prevention

- PAUSE continues to provide monitoring information on the women engaged and the positive outcomes they are achieving, this has resulted in an extension to the current contract.
- Pilot Early Intervention and Prevention service has commenced and is being closely monitored. A formal review will be undertaken in order to ensure proof of concept and confirm future commissioning intentions.

Theme 4 – Improving Placements & Support for Care Leavers

- Business case has been submitted in relation to increasing supported lodging providers internally and is awaiting sign off.

Theme 5 – Enhancing Learning Outcomes for Children & Young People

- Work currently being undertaken with the Head of Virtual schools. Discussions have commenced with the Boarding School providers in order to expand the opportunities for our children and young people and increase placement choice.

Theme 6 – Building Our Fostering Capacity and Adoption Outcomes

- Business case for internal change has been submitted for approval.

In terms of impact and performance, the Manager outlined that there had been opened engagement with the Independent Fostering market which was really positive and gave an opportunity to feedback and update them on our improvement journey and aspirations for the future. She also advised that external placement numbers have decreased and plateaued and the Council are now monitoring these weekly focusing on both internal and external placement changes.

In terms of next steps, the Manager advised that the following would be undertaken:

- Review and update the Sufficiency Action Plan to make sure its fit for purpose
- Unregulated provision changes needs to be added to plan
- A schedule for provider engagement to be developed to ensure networking with the market continues to develop
- Ensure the regional work meets the needs of Middlesbrough and where not continue to work independently
- Work with in-house fostering to understand the business plan for the future which in turn can identify our commissioning intentions moving forward
-

Following the presentation, one of the care leavers in attendance advised that she was part of the foster carers' panel and they were currently doing some marketing to get more foster carers, and the Manager advised a meeting would be scheduled to pursue this further.

AGREED- That the action plan be noted.

21/18 **PERFORMANCE AGAINST CORPORATE PARENTING 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 Director 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 anything where you saw wasn't meeting target.

The main points to note were as follows:

Demand

- There has been an 22.6% reduction in overall numbers of children looked after since August 2020
- Since the height of **702** looked after children during September 2020, there has been a reduction of 159 looked after children.
- The rate of looked after children per 10,000 of the population has reduced from 166 in August 2021 to 165.1 in September and has reduced from 207 in the last year to 164.5 in the last year.
- This remains higher than our statistical neighbour where the rate of looked

after children per 10,000 is 125.5.

- 122 children and young people have ceased to be looked after in the last 6 months. 100 children have become looked after in the same period
- In October 2020 the data evidences that for every child ceasing to be looked after, 1.7 children started to become looked after. This means that more children were becoming looked after than ceasing and the looked after population continued to increase.
- There has been a month on month reduction in this throughout the year until March 2021 when improvements resulted in less children becoming looked after than those ceasing.
- This progress has continued. In June 2021 for every child ceasing to be looked after 0.6 children became looked after. This has remained static for the last 3 months.
- 55% of the workforce have between 15-20 children on their caseload.

Permanency

Special Guardianship Orders/ Child arrangement order (SGOs/CAO)

- In the last 6 months 51 children have secured permanence through the making of a Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangement Order.
- This has been achieved through increased management oversight within Legal Gateway Panel, Permanency Monitoring Group, an investment in a commissioned service and a drive on performance management.
- In July 2020 there was a height of 212 children cared for by family or friends in connected carer placements. This has reduced through improvement work to support children to achieve permanence. In August 2021 this reduced to 129 children. (39.1% reduction).

Placements with Parents

- In the most recent forecasting model demonstrates a reduction in the number of children subject to care proceedings and placed with a parent.
- In September 2020 there were 99 children living at home and subject to a Care Order. This has reduced to 58 children in September 2021. This is 41.4% reduction.

Adoption

- There is a 56% increase of number of adoption orders in the year 20/21 (25) compared to 2019/2020 (16).
- In this year to date 14 Adoption Orders have been secured. There are currently a further 32 children progressing to adoption with Placement Orders. Only 2 children are not linked to adopters
- The local authority is on track to increase the number of children subject to adoption orders significantly in this financial year.
- The 20/21 adoption score card evidences that the in the 12 months leading up to 31 March 2021 the average number of days between Placement Orders

and Adoption Order has reduced to 189 days. The 3 year average is 323 days.

Placements

- The Head of Services advised that whilst the graph showed an increase in the number of children placed outside a 20 mile radius of Middlesbrough since July an analysis of this data shows that the majority of the children impacted have moved to either adoptive placements, placements with family or in house carers.
- In September the data shows there has been a reduction in the percentage of children paced outside of 20 miles of Middlesbrough. This has increased by 2% improvement since August and sits at 76%.
- 10 children have been placed outside of Middlesbrough in September 2021.
- Positively, of the 10 children that moved to an out of area placement in September 2021 – 1 child was placed in their adoptive placement, 2 children placed with family in connected carers arrangements, 5 children were placed in foster care – of which 3 placements were in house foster placements and 1 in an external residential placement. The YP that moved to a residential placement moved from Gleneagles to a more appropriate long term setting.
- There are currently 17 care leavers residing with former foster carers.

Placement stability

- At the end of September 2021 – 33 children looked after by Middlesbrough had experience 3 or more placement moves in the last 12 months. (6% of the cla population).
- Positively this has reduced from 39 in August 2021. This has reduced from 128 in the same period last year.
- Graph 2 demonstrates that 4.2% of the full looked after population have experienced a placement breakdown in the last 12 month. For the first time in 12 months this has fallen below the target.

IRPs

There has been a 30% reduction in the number of IRPs in the last 6 months compared to the previous 6 month period. 89% of IRPs in September were resolved in stage 1 or 2.

EET/NEET

The second graph reported showed a small increase in the number of children in care post 16 in employment, education or training (EET). 77% of 16+ are EET in September 2021.

Of the 180 care experienced young people - 47% of the care leaving population being engaged in either full or part time education training and employment and 53% not in Education, employment to training (NEET), however work will be underway to

address some of the barriers.

Of the 93 young people that are NEET:

- 1 YP NEET due to illness or disability
- 3 YP NEET due to pregnancy or parenting
- 27 YP NEET and available for work
- 10 are NEET due to caring responsibilities
- 5 YP are NEET due to being in custody (education status to be rechecked)
- 26 YP are NEET due to emotional or mental health difficulties
- 1 YP is NEET due to religious traditions
- 4 YP are NEET due to substance misuse
- 16 YP are NEET due to other circumstances

Finally the Head of Service outlined some of the impacts:

Visits

93% of looked after children have been seen within the last 6 weeks; this is a 1% increase from last month. This has been consistently high at over 90% since May. This has increased from 88% in the same period last year however has remained consistently high and Performance clinics and compliance is well embedded

Supervision/Management Oversight

94% of looked after children have had a supervision within the month of September and this was a 2% increase from last month. This has been consistently high at over 90% since May.

Personal Education Plans

Performance in relation to PEPs remains high at 100%. This is performance for all children in the last 12 month period. Good practice warrants an update PEP each 6 months. Performance remains high with this indicator also. This performance has remained consistently high.

For clarification, all looked after children have an updated PEP every term and there are in place to constantly review their education/ their needs/ consider their transitions and they are a legal requirement and continue post 16 into adulthood.

The targets are devised are led by schools and will work with the child/ social worker and carer where the special attention are. These are reviewed at a meeting every term. These will also look at enrichment and any emotional wellbeing. External quality of PEPs were also deemed good.

Health Assessments

91% of looked after children have had a recorded health check within the last 12 months. This does not take in to account those older children who have refused a medical assessment. This has been a 1% increase since August 2021.

The Head of Service was thanked for her presentation.

AGREED- That the presentation be noted.

21/19 **VIRTUAL SCHOOL TRANSITIONS 2021**

The Head of Access to Education presented the virtual schools transitions 2021 report to the Board. As way of introduction, the Board were made aware that the Virtual schools governing body had asked the Head of Virtual Schools to provide some clarity regarding key transitions in the education of children looked after e.g. significant point where a child is moving from education setting to the next and these are points in a child's live if the support isn't right, that learning and progress can be put back.

All children looked after have a personal education plan (PEP) and the PEO process supports pupils at transition points throughout their school journey; this includes transition into care, emergency moves and natural transitions such as starting reception, moving to secondary school or post 16 education.

The routines and processes in place that support all transitions must be flexible to ensure the needs of individual children are met. Where possible children will need time to become familiar with their new surroundings, at their own pace and with support from their key person. Planning should start 12 months preceding any natural transition point and then be a continuous and evolving process that can be adapted to meet the needs of the individual child. Many activities such as joint meetings between settings and school staff can be on-going throughout the year.

In terms of support, the Officer outlined the following in terms of the following transitions:

EYFS

Children aged 2+ who attend an educational provision are required to have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which records both care planning information as well as educational next steps to ensure appropriate progress is made. Normally, this transition is quite straightforward, by there are exceptions.

Last year;

- 28 children transitioned from nursery to reception
- 6 of those children are now in their forever homes and are no longer looked after
- 3 children had SEN support needs and 0 had an EHCP
- 9 children started reception in schools outside of Middlesbrough

Primary to Secondary

The transition to secondary school is a huge step for all children and especially big step for children who are looked after. When a child moves to secondary school they no longer remain in one class all day, but are required to move around the school. Children have to deal with timetables and a wide variety of subjects.

Some common transitional problems for children are as follows:

1. When leaving primary school children go from being the oldest to the youngest in their new school.
2. From having one teacher in primary school children will have to cope with as many as ten or more teachers with different teaching styles and personalities.
3. Secondary school is much bigger and children will go from having one classroom to ten or more.
4. There is more homework to be done.
5. A larger number of textbooks need to be transported and organised.
6. A longer school day.

7. Greater competition both academically and in sports and activities.
8. Faster pace of teaching
9. Having to make new friends – this is especially difficult if a child's primary school friends have not moved to the same secondary school.

In order to support year 6 transition all looked after children received £1,000 Pupil Premium Plus to ensure enhanced and bespoke transition arrangements were in place.

Last year:

- 43 children transitioned from primary to secondary
- 7 of those children are now in their forever homes and are no longer looked after
- 12 children had SEN support needs and 10 had an EHCP
- 23 children started secondary in schools outside of Middlesbrough

Post 16

Young people left school on the last Friday in June. All young people of school leaving age needed to do one of the following:

- stay in full-time education, for example at school, sixth form college or further education college
- start an apprenticeship or traineeship
- spend 20 hours or more a week working or volunteering while also doing part-time education or training

The local authority has a duty to make sure young people are offered a suitable place by the end of September. This is known as the September Guarantee.

Care leavers are eligible for the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund which can help with things like books, travel and equipment.

Last year;

- 47 children transitioned from secondary to post 16
- 2 of those children are now in their forever homes and are no longer looked after
- 15 children had SEN support needs and 13 had an EHCP
- 38 had an offer of full time education and the other 9 had a training place offer.

September 2021 Education, employment and training figures:

NEET	23%
Education	66%
Employment	6%
Training	5%

Finally the Board were shown some diagrams which outlined the planning process for a child looked after to ensure transition goes as smoothly as possible. E.g. EYFS planning will begin 2 years in advance of a child starting school.

The Chair thanked the officer for his presentation.

AGREED- That the presentation be noted.

21/110

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

Care Leavers Week 2021

The Chair reminded the Board that Care Leavers week would run from 25- 29

October 2021 as part of this, there would be training to the Board from Middlesbrough Care leavers.

Fostering and Adoption

The Chair finally addressed residents of the Town, expressing if they required any information regarding fostering or adoption to get in touch with Middlesbrough Council.

Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum Update

Workshop for Corporate Parents- 25th October 2021 (Care Leaver's Week)

The Care Leavers Forum ran an hour long 'A Day in the Life of a Child in Care' workshop for Corporate Parents during Care Leavers Week the themes included,

- Communicating effectively with and about young people.
- Stereotypes of children and young people in care.
- Pledges to children in care and care leavers in Middlesbrough.

The members of the Care Leavers forum facilitated this workshop for members of the Corporate Parenting Board to attend and find out more about the challenges that care experienced young people in Middlesbrough face each day.

Corporate Parent attendees were then invited to pledge a promise to the Care Leavers of Middlesbrough. The attached slide shows these pledges, demonstrating what corporate parents were able to take away from the session. Please see supporting pledges document.

The Care Leaver's Forum are keen to put on another session and create another workshop for elected members to attend.

The Middlesbrough BIG Takeover! 22nd-26th November

Middlesbrough Children Matter and Participation People planned a BIG Takeover event running from 22nd-26th November. The Middlesbrough BIG Takeover gave young people a chance to take over the role of a senior leader at Middlesbrough Borough Council for the week!

There was a number of Children in Care and Care Leavers who took part in this event. The aim of the week was for young people to support a senior decision maker with a big business challenge in their service area and using their youth perspective and lived experience of growing up in Middlesbrough, make some suggestions to make Middlesbrough an even better place for young people! Please see supporting document to hear what they got up to and how they influenced change within Middlesbrough Borough Council during their BIG Takeover Week!

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Corporate Parent Workshop

During Care Leavers Week, our Care Leaver Forum delivered a workshop with Middlesbrough elected members and asked each to pledge one thing to help children in care & care leavers.

I PLEDGE TO...

Put a plan in place to make sure staff have the knowledge & skills to assess identity well (including gender identity) so that this can be properly considered when we care plan.

As a Social Worker i will show that I care and be there through not only the good times but the bad. Be consistent, reliable and honest.

Start the LGBTQ+ Youth Group.

I will show that i care and be there through not only the good times but the bad. Be consistent, reliable and honest.

Try not to let my preconceptions colour my interactions.

Push the importance for all of our partners eg, schools, to be more aware of the world through a child in care's eyes; and for our social workers to always be creative and passionate.

Every young person is an individual and should be treated as such. we need to understand their needs before we find a solution for them.

Always listen and communicate-it is so important.

Bring Care leavers to the attention of partner agencies to see what they can contribute to support them e.g. free leisure activities.

Make sure that we listen and hear what life is like for children and young people.

Ensure children and young people ALWAYS feel their voice is heard.

Ensure Staff and Corporate Parents have necessary skills to make children have confidence in the system.

Be in regular contact with children in care in collaboration with Social Services.

Listen and not been judgemental.

Talk to YP as you would anyone else.

Listen to children and YP on a regular basis and offer them the quality time.

As PSW, I will put a plan in place to make sure staff have the knowledge & skills to assess identity well (including gender identity) so that this can be properly considered when we care plan.

Be careful when writing reports about YP as this follows them for the rest of there life and can effect them in future jobs with Middlesbrough council or it can make them feel like they aren't good enough

To see the whole of the young person.

When we report on performance and audit we ensure we add in analysis on the impact of the individual child and we are clear how our action to improve will impact on each child.

Always need to understand who is important in each young person's life and how we can support each young person to maintain a safe relationship with everybody (including pets!)

Make sure to double check your understanding of what a young person is saying with them.

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Middlesbrough Children’s Services

Virtual School

Interim Annual Report 2020/ 21

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Agenda Item 6

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Middlesbrough Children Matter

Our Mission is to show Middlesbrough children they matter. Our top 10 priorities that help us fulfill this mission are:

1. Making Middlesbrough a place that children are proud to live in.
2. Providing services that are fit for the children who will grow to serve Middlesbrough.
3. Seeing children and families as collaborators and not as clients.
4. Making Middlesbrough a community that children are proud to belong to.
5. Understanding our role is more than visiting children because we have to; we visit them because we want to.
6. Providing services that are focused on developing happy and healthy communities for our children and families.
7. Redefine the narrative of Middlesbrough and communicate a positive perception of our town on a national basis. We will create an environment that people are proud to be a part of, one in which children and families matter.
8. Create an environment where children can express themselves and communicate with us.
9. Celebrating the achievements of children and being active participants in the attainment of them.
10. Encouraging the ambition of our children and guiding them into the future they aspire to.

Foreword

I am delighted to introduce our Interim Annual Report outlining how we have been supporting our Children in Care to achieve their best learning outcomes. I am immensely proud to lead a dedicated team committed to supporting the Children's workforce and to champion the education of Middlesbrough's Children Looked After. Team stability has been a key factor in our success; the team is made up of a group of professionals who are determined to support and champion the education of our vulnerable learners, many of whom have experienced great upheaval in their lives.

Covid 19 has made a significant difference to the way we have worked over the last 18 months; our inability to attend face to face meetings has resulted in extensive use of telephone conferencing, allowing us to maintain regular contact with children, teachers, carers and professionals. Our Personal Education Plan completion rate for 'early years' and school age children was 100% last academic year. We also successfully ensured school age children were in possession of the appropriate technology to support learning during lockdown periods.

We are extremely proud of the progress our children have made both in their social and emotional development and educational achievements. We have many positive stories about how our young people overcame adversity and went on to make huge gains in both their personal achievements and education.

We have delivered an extensive training programme via the Designated Teacher forum. These meetings have been well attended and the feedback has been excellent. The 'Attachment Aware Trauma Informed' programme and the promotion of a 'relational support plan', rather than a 'behavioural plan' approach has been well received by schools and is being developed in a number of our settings as a direct result.

We have continued to work tirelessly to ensure that the education of Children in Care is seen as high priority across the Local Authority and that all professionals understand the difficulties children may face at school. Middlesbrough Children's Service is on an improvement journey and our role is to make sure we offer high quality support in educational matters and appropriate challenge where needed. This acknowledges that education is a significant protective factor. Education for many young people will provide a pathway out of poverty, increase social mobility and improve life chances. As good 'Corporate Parents' we always strive to ensure that Children in Care have the best educational opportunities available. We recognise that we need to continue to improve to ensure children receive the best possible education.

Victoria Banks Virtual School Head

Highlights of the Year

Over the academic year 2020/21 Middlesbrough Virtual School continued supporting our Looked after Children both inside and outside of their educational setting. The support provided varied depending on the needs of the child but included:

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

The Virtual School works closely with LA teams and multi-agency partners to increase the life-chances of our Looked after Children including working closely with our Leaving Care team 'Pathways' to support young people transitioning from care.

The Virtual School continues to provide Attachment Aware training to all schools who have a Middlesbrough looked after child on roll on request.

The impact of the continuing support of the Virtual School can be seen in the direction of travel of attainment and progress across Key Stages 4 this year. It is important to note that cohort sizes fluctuate and therefore results are variable making analysis more difficult. This is further compounded by the lack of comparable data due to the pandemic.



Academic Outcomes

The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced uncertainty into major aspects of national and global society, including for schools. For example there is uncertainty about how the lack of face to face education has impacted on learning and outcomes. In recent times Middlesbrough's looked after population has made year on year improvements in end of key stage outcomes with good strides at key stage 2 though this has stalled a little this year. It is not possible at this time to understand how Middlesbrough Looked after children have performed in relation to their local, regional or national peers as these data sets are not yet available.

Although year on year data gives some indication with regards to looked after children performances it must be considered in context. Many factors such as; age entering care, pre-care experiences including Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), the number of school and residential moves, current and historic school attendance and special educational needs all make year on year statistical comparisons difficult and unreliable.

GCSE outcomes are above pre Covid figures with 14.7% of looked after children leaving secondary school with at least a grade 5 in both maths and English at GCSE. The data suggests that COVID 19 has had the largest impact at key stage 2 with a decline in all measures from the previous year.

Key stage 1 has seen a 1% dip in reading from last year however there is considerable improvement in the number of children who met the expected standard in reading, writing and maths combined with a 25% increase from 2019 (Pre-Covid) and a 23% increase from last year.

At Early Years Foundation Stage 33% of looked after children achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD). Of the pupils in this cohort 20% were receiving Special Education Needs Support (SEN Support). It is worth noting that these young people will not have been of compulsory school age when they became Looked After, and therefore may not have been enrolled at a setting to receive early year's provision until they became Looked After.

	12M+ 2019 % achieved standard	12m+ 2020 % achieved standard	12m+ 2021 % achieved standard
Early Years GLD	45	68	33
KS1 R/W/M	37	39	62
KS1 Reading	52	42	40
KS1 Writing	42	45	69
KS1 Maths	49	39	69
KS2 R/W/M	37	47	28
KS2 Reading	49	60	57
KS2 Writing	51	55	37
KS2 Maths	52	65	47
KS4 Basics 5+	10	13	14.7

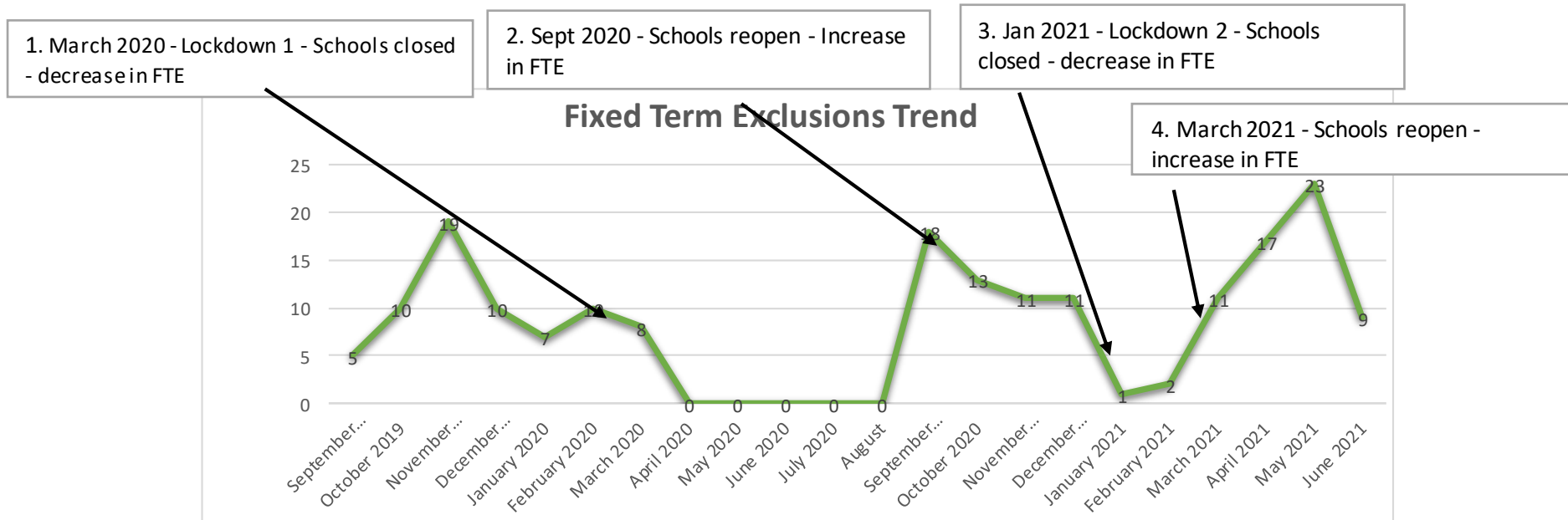
Attendance, Exclusion and Progression

0% children permanently excluded in the last four years!

It is not just attainment and progress where the impact of the Virtual School is visible. Recent analysis has highlighted that the support of the Virtual School contributes to an 8.2% reduction in the number of fixed term exclusions received by Middlesbrough Looked after Children when compared to the national figure. In the academic year 2020/21, 36 pupils were excluded for 1 day or more equating to 213 days missed in total. There has been an increase in the number of CLA excluded (+8) from the previous year however there has been an decrease in the length of time that individual CLA are excluded for from previous years by 97 days. Behaviour Mentors, 1:1 support and fast track mental health support provided by Virtual School is impacting positively on reducing exclusions.

It is difficult to compare exclusion rates to previous years due to the pandemic however it is clear that exclusions have decreased during episodes of lockdown. This gives more weight to the findings of well documented studies that looked after children do better in school when there are higher levels of adult support.

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Nationally 0.35% of CLA were permanently excluded but in Middlesbrough no looked after child has been permanently excluded for 4 years.

Good attendance is considered to be above 95%, or approximately no more than one day of absence each half term. In 2018/19, the last available national data sets, children who had been continuously looked after for 12 months or more had a rate of 4.7% absence the same as the average for all pupils and far lower than the average for CiN. The last year's overall CLA attendance for Middlesbrough was 84.2%, with an overall absence rate of 15.5% of which 12.7% were authorised, with 2.9% of absences unauthorised. It must be noted that school attendance has been affected by the pandemic. As there is no current national data it is not possible to compare CLA attendance with that of their peers.

- 44 children (12%) have 100% attendance.
- 177 children (48.3%) have 95% or above attendance.
- 161 children (44%) have less than 90% attendance.

Celebrating Success

It is important to recognise and support the achievements of all children and young people. This can help to develop their confidence and motivation for learning. It can also help them to reflect on their own learning and plan appropriate next steps. The Virtual School worked with colleagues in Children's Services to ensure that all children received a package in the post with a gift and a personalised card noting how we, as corporate parents are proud of them for their individual achievement. The Virtual School also coordinated a theatre trip where CLA were able to enjoy a Horrible Histories play. The Virtual School celebrates individual achievements each term with prizes and awards for children who do well and also ensures children with 100% attendance are recognised each term with an Attendance Award.

It is not just through compulsory schooling that the Virtual School is supporting disadvantaged pupils to be ambitious and aspirational. The Virtual School provides support to care experienced young people engaged in further education and training. The local authority has a duty to make sure young people leaving secondary school are offered a suitable post 16 place by the end of September. This is known as the September Guarantee. Care leavers are also eligible for the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund which can help with things like books, travel and equipment. Last year 47 young people transitioned from secondary to post 16; 2 of those young people are now in their forever homes and are no longer looked after, 28 have Special Educational Needs, 38 had an offer of full time education and the other 9 have a training offer.

Case Study 1

D came into care in June 2018 when she was in year 7. Prior to coming into care D had very poor school attendance, as low as 30% in primary school. When at primary school D was on a Child Protection Plan under the category of neglect. This is as a result of parental substance misuse, potential domestic abuse and parents failing to meet D's needs. This included ensuring D attended school regularly and attended health appointments.

Since coming into care D has had one single long term placement and is thriving. She has had 100% attendance at school. She has thrown herself into school life. D's pupil premium pays for the school counsellor and an academic mentor. She is taking part in the school's Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Outside of school D attends the police cadets. D has also expressed an interest in joining the Children in Care Council.

During Covid D and carer decided not to take up the school offer due to the ill health of the carer. D was provided with a DfE laptop and had some additional tuition in science provided by the Virtual School. To everyone's surprise, in spite of her low attendance at primary school, D is a very high achieving pupil. She has been predicted to achieve 6 and 7 in her final GCSE grades. In recent assessments since returning to school following lock down she has achieved grade 9 in her English assessments. Her teacher says that the quality of her work is A level standard, D was given a high street voucher to recognise her achievement.

When D talks about her early life she says that reading was an escapism for her. She is an exceptional young lady that shows remarkable resilience. She plans to go to university in the future and we look forward to supporting her in all her achievements!

Case Study 2

L spent the first two years of his life with his biological family, during which time he experienced significant neglect. L was removed from his parents due to concerns around his parents learning difficulties and capacity to protect L and meet all of his needs. L functions at an age much younger than his chronological and only began walking when in placement with his carers. L is 4 years old and has lived with his foster carers for 2 years.

During Ls first personal education planning meeting it was apparent that he presented with moderate to severe delay in his understanding and spoken language skills. L could only say 'hiya'.

Observations of L in the nursery environment highlighted that he struggled to engage with learning and coping in a larger classroom without additional strategies and interventions.

The care team placed L on the SEN register so that the nursery could implement a support plan for him and closely monitor his development. In conjunction with this a referral to Speech and Language therapist and the Educational Psychologist was made. The care team worked closely together to support L gaining an Educational Health and Care Plan.

L is now attending a specialist provision that can meet his needs. L loves going to school and no longer gets frustrated or displays any concerning behaviours. Carers are now in the process of adopting L so he can have a secure placement in a loving and caring environment.

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Residential Services Regulation 44 Key Themes April 2021 to October 2021





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

Regulation 44 Monthly Themes

What is Regulation 44?

From April 2015, the Children's Homes Regulations and Quality Standards came into force. Regulation 44 requires an independent person to visit at least once a month to make a rigorous and impartial assessment of the home's arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children in the home's care.

Since April 2021 there have been 42 regulation 44 inspections completed

Regulation 44 Monthly Themes

April 2021	Residents live in homes that provide physical safety and security.
May	Safeguarding
June	Engaging with the wider system.
July	How the home promote health and well-being
Aug	The Managers Supervision.
Sept	Placement breakdowns.
Oct	Risk assessments

Regulation 44 Key Themes

Comments from the regulation 44 officer

1. It remains evident that the home is making significant efforts to support young people's input and have consideration for their views, wishes and feelings.
2. The service works within the wider system to access support for children
3. I love it here the staff take care of me (young person)
4. Gleneagles has been a life line for my children who speak so fondly of the service and the staff (parent)
5. Seriously, I cannot thank them all enough, each and every one is amazing (parent)
6. The service continues to have strong leadership with a clear vision and robust quality assurance processes in place.
7. Children feel safe in the service
8. Children's health needs are met and fully understood
9. Managers and staff receive reflective supervision (including the manager)
10. Children's placements are stable with support from other agencies
11. The services have many risk assessments which are well assessed and well reviewed

Recommendations

- Ensure to record duration of fire drill evacuation CHR 12. Next fire drill.
- Ensure reg 40s, missing and BASE forms are sent for review next visit. Include a clear rationale as to why regulation 40 notifications have not been submitted when this has been considered.
- Ensure to send BASE 78 for review. Reg 11 - next period.
- Seek to identify some training for staff in relation to a condition displayed by one young person Reg 13 – by next period

Questions

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Corporate Parenting Board

Quarterly Report

2021/22

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Agenda Item 8



MIDDLESBROUGH
CHILDREN
MATTER



1. Number of carers and places:

Quarter:	Carers:	Places:
Annual Return – 2020/21	145	264
Quarter 1	138	251
Quarter 2	130	243
Quarter 3		
Quarter 4		

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

Quarter 1 - April, May and June – (Data taken on the 30 June 2021)

Quarter 2 - July, August and September – (Data taken on the 30 September 2021)

As noted in the annual report there has been a number of deregistration's for both connected/kinship and mainstream fostering families

2. Number of carers by primary care type:

Primary Care Type:	2020/21	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Long-term	15	14	13		
Short-term/respice	94	72	71		
Fully approved connected persons	34	31	23		
Fostering to adopt	2	3	4		
Total:	145	138	130		

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There has been an increase in the number of foster to adopt carers, this is indicative the early permanence for children is increasing. The reduction of fully approved connected carers demonstrates that permanence via a legal order such as a Child Arrangement Order or Special Guardianship Order has been achieved..

3. Number of carers approved:

Approved Carers:	2020/21	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Mainstream	15	2	4		
Fully approved connected persons	23	1	1		
Total:	38	3	5		

4. Number of carers household de-registrations:

De-Registrations	2020/21	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Mainstream	15	6	4		
Fully approved connected persons	17	9	1		
Total:	32	15	5		

5. Placements:

Age Group:	2020/21	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Number of children	160	156	139		
Number of vacant places	45	41	50		
Number of not available places	55	45	45		

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The service is currently reviewing fostering families terms of approval to ensure it is line with what fostering families are able to provide. As part of this we are reviewing our data and how this is collated to bring the methodology of this in line with other parts of the local authority. Weekly meetings are held to review fostering families availability in order to ensure that where support is required that this is offered in timely manner.

There are a number of reasons for 'placements' not being used or available is for a variety of reasons – suitable matching for children, fostering families personal circumstances, awaiting resignation, changes in terms of approval.

6. Number of carer households on hold:

Breakdown of carers taking a break/pending resignation	2020/2	Q1	Q2
Carers taking a break/awaiting deregistration	8	6	6
Health reason	11	9	11
Current investigation – standards of care	3	3	2
Total:	22	18	19

7. Recruitment:

Recruitment:	2020/21	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Initial enquiries	112	25	35		

What's Working Well

We have successfully appointed permanent experienced social workers.

The leadership within the fostering service is stable.

The fostering academy is being developed and is due to be launched early 2022.

We are heavily focusing on staff development and have a plan for this learning throughout 2022.

We will be implementing the Mockingbird model of practice.

Assessments under regulation 24 are reducing in timescale from referral to completion.

Our training support and development offer to kinship/connected carers continues to increase and this is further supported through working with kinship carer groups

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QUESTIONS

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Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2020/21

Date: October 2021

Author: Siobhan Davies, Gail Johnson & Gemma Maile,
Review & Development Management Team



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Introduction and Purpose of the Annual Report

This report is a statutory requirement under Section 7, paragraph 11 of the IRO Handbook which sets out that the manager of the IRO Service must provide an annual report on the delivery of the IRO Service which can then be scrutinised by members of the Corporate Parenting Board. It provides information on the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and their contribution to improving outcomes for children in care, care leavers. In Middlesbrough the IROs have a dual role and therefore this report includes those children subject to a Protection Plan. This report focuses on the reporting year April 2020 to March 2021. It was completed by the Review and Development unit Service Manager Siobhan Davies and two Team Managers, Gail Johnson and Gemma Maile. It is based upon comprehensive input from all IRO's, Business Support and the Performance Data Team.

Legal Context & Statutory Function of the IRO

The appointment by the Local Authority of an IRO is a statutory requirement. The statutory duties of the IRO are set out in Section 25B (1) Children Act 1989;

- Monitor the performance by the Local Authority of their functions in relation to the child's case;
- Participate in any review of the child's case;
- Ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case are given due consideration by the appropriate authority; and
- Perform any other function which is prescribed in Care Planning Regulations.

There are two clear and separate aspects of the function of an IRO:

1. Chairing the child's review; and
2. Monitoring the child's case on an ongoing basis.

The IRO handbook sets out the statutory roles and duties as well as the strategic and managerial responsibilities of Local Authorities in establishing an effective IRO service.

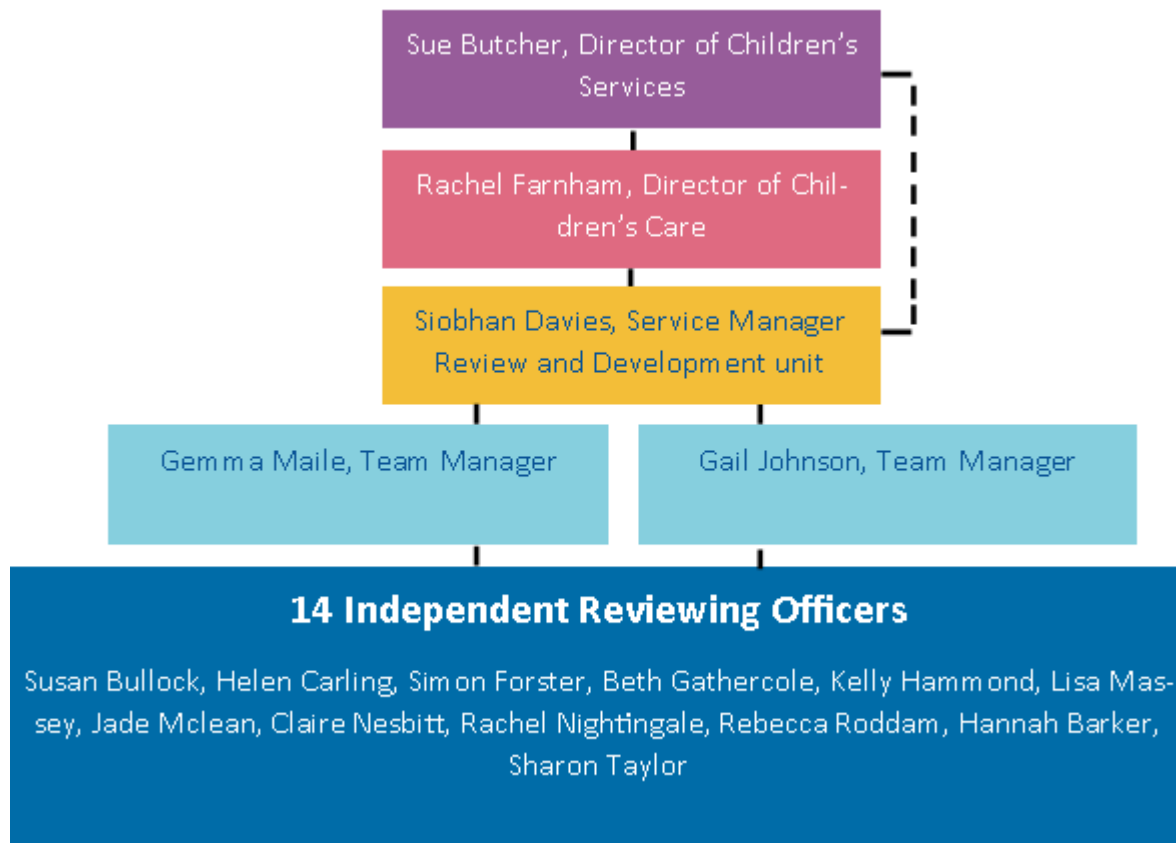
In summary the IRO has a number of specific responsibilities, including;

- Promoting the voice of the child;
- Ensuring that plans for looked after children are based on a detailed and informed assessment, are up to date, effective and provide a real and genuine response to each child's needs;
- Making sure that the child understands how an advocate could help and his/her entitlement to one;
- Offering a safeguard to prevent any 'drift' in care planning for looked after children and the delivery of services to them;
- Monitoring the activity of the local authority as a corporate parent in ensuring that care plans have given proper consideration and weight to the child's wishes and feelings and that, where appropriate, the child fully understands

IRO Handbook paragraph 2.4

All IROs within Middlesbrough are employed in a dual role. In addition to being Independent Reviewing Officers for children and young people in care, they also have responsibility for the role of Independent Chair at Child Protection Conferences. The benefit of combining the two roles means that there is a greater level of consistency and oversight for those children and young people who transition from Child Protection and become children in our care. These children and young people can then benefit from continued relationships to support improved outcomes irrespective of a child's status.

The Team



The Team is made up of 14 IROs, overseen by 2 Team Managers, Gemma Maile & Gail Johnson. The team has a wealth of skills and experience, from expertise within Safeguarding Care Planning, Children in Care, Early Help, substance misuse, exploitation and children with disabilities. The range of skills within the team complement each other well and helps to create a strong culture of learning and development.

Over the past 3-years caseloads in the team have increased from 70 (2019) to 100 (2020) and high of 114 in 2021.

The team is stable, at least half of the IROs have been in post for over 5-years and are very experienced in their roles. Over the past year we have welcomed some new members of the team; Kelly Hammond & Jade McLean.

The position of the Team has remained the same throughout 2020/21. The team have direct access to the Director of Children's Services (DCS), Sue Butcher and meet with her on a regular basis to share their knowledge and insight into practice, as well as challenges and strengths across the service.

During 2020/21 the IRO service received 1 complaint, which was not upheld.

Meet our Children in Care

If Middlesbrough was a village of 100, 2 children would be in our care..

Of those Children who are
Looked after...



54

are Males



46

are Females

Based on CLA Population

Based on CLA Population



23

Children are
from
Ethnic Minorities

Based on CLA Population



Age and gender breakdown

● Under 1 ● 1-4 ● 5-9 ● 10-15 ● 16 & over



49

Children are
placed in
Middlesbrough

21

Children are
placed over 20 miles
of Home

Based on CLA Population

52

Based on CLA Population

Looked After
Children have been in
the same Placement for
2 years or more



Based on CLA Population

86

Children have
had less than
3 Placements



Based on CLA Population

1 Child is leaving Care

1 Child is adopted

Based on CLA Population

5 Children have a Placement Order waiting for Adoption

Based on CLA Population

67 Children are subject to a full Care Order

19 Children are subject to an Interim Care Order

7 Children are subject to a Section 20

Based on CLA Population

40 Children entered Care

This is a 23% decrease from the previous year 2020

Based on CLA Population

49 Children left Care

This is a 40% increase from the previous year 2020

Based on CLA Population

Of the children who left care

- 16%** Have a Child Arrangement Order
- 22%** Have a Special Guardianship Order
- 11%** Return home to live with parents, relatives or other person with parental responsibility
- 1%** Return home to live with parents, relatives or other person with no parental responsibility

Performance of IROs for Children in our Care

Based on CLA Population

21
Children
attend their
Looked After review



33 Children did
not attend their
Looked After review, but
conveyed their feelings
which were shared
on their behalf



10 Children are represented
by an Advocate in their
Looked After review

Based on CLA Population

75%
Of CLA
Reviews were
held in timescale



Based on CLA Population

43%
Of Children
were seen
before their review



Based on CLA Population

The total number of CLA reviews
that took place between 2020-2021 is

1495



Based on CLA Population

58% of children had their Initial Health Assessment
before the first CLA review

31% of children had a PEP before the
first CLA review



Key Messages about Children in our Care

If you are a child in our care you are more likely to be male than female (55%) and probably white British, although there are more children from minority ethnic communities entering our care in the past year (+2.5%).

If you are a child in our care it's likely you have had less than 3 home moves (86%), and you are likely to have lived in your home for over 2 years (52%). There's less chance that you are waiting for your long-term plan to be agreed in Court (19% reduced from 27% last year) which means you are on your way to a plan of permanence. There's likelihood that you will continue to live in Middlesbrough (almost 50%), but for some (21%) you will live over 20 miles from home.

It was more likely in 20/21 that you would leave our care (40% more children did than last year), when you leave care it's likely you now live with parents or extended family (22% Special Guardianship Order, 16% Child Arrangements Order, 12% home with parents or another person with/without PR). You are less likely to be adopted (1%). 5% of children have a Placement order and are waiting to be matched.

When your care plan is being reviewed you might come along (21%) or you could send your views through another person or in writing (33%). If you don't feel able to share your views yourself you might have an advocate to help you (10%). To help you prepare for your review your IRO may visit or call you (43%) to encourage you to be part of the process. Your reviews should be either 3 or 6-monthly and most are on time (75%). We have more IROs in the team now to make sure more reviews happen on time, our target is 95%. At your review we will have potentially reviewed your Health Assessment (58%) and your Personal Education Plan (31%) to make sure everyone is working to shared goals for your health, education and wellbeing.

What Quality Assurance tells us about the experience of children in our care

If you are a child in our care your IRO is responsible for quality assurance, which means checking that you have had a say in your plan, making sure you get the right support that meets your needs, and that there is an accurate record of everything that happens. To do this IROs complete a 'Monitoring Tool'. These are saved on your record and if your IRO has any worries they will use this tool to share with your Social Worker and their Manager so that things can be resolved for you.

The Monitoring Tool is being used more often but not yet 100% of the time. When IROs have completed these tools they tell us that;

You are likely to have an up to date plan (75%) which is discussed at your review, but some (25%) need to be updated. We know that sometimes plans need to be better for you, we call this SMART (Specific, measurable, achievable, Realistic & Timely). SMART plans help to make sure that you and everyone working with you knows what needs to happen, when and what the outcome will be.

When plans are not SMART it can mean that there is delay (or things take too long to happen) and the outcomes we're hoping for are not always achieved. IROs role is to challenge when this happens, in Middlesbrough this is called 'Issues Resolution Process'. IROs raised 150 challenges last year, most of these were about drift and delay (65%). Some were raised because procedures were not being followed (15%) and the rest were due to things like; concerns they found when completing the IRO Monitoring Tool, or life story work was not completed.

To make sure plans are right your Social Worker would need to carry out an assessment, IROs found that not all children have an assessment, which is something that needs to improve.

The Audit to Excellence Team (who quality assure the work of the IRO) told us that most of the looked after reviews require improvement to be good (65%), some are good (15%) and some are inadequate (20%). To be better we would make sure that your views are clear in the review and that you feel able to attend and be part of your review. The IROs also need to make sure that all of the right people attend your review (this is parents/carers other family members and professionals) which we do most of the time.

Your IRO will write to the court (provide a statement) to let the Judge and everyone else know what they think your plan should be.

Learning from Disruption Meetings

Where there are concerns for the stability of a long term home of a child, this should be identified and addressed at an early stage by the relevant professionals with a stability meeting which will put in place some actions to help to maintain the child in their home where it is the right thing for the child. These stability meetings are chaired by the Team Manager for the child.

A disruption meeting must be held for a child whose long term home ends abruptly or in an unplanned way. The meeting will focus on the needs of the child and help the child and carers to move on while also informing future planning, particularly with a view to securing permanency for the child by preventing any future breakdowns.

Within the Disruption Meeting there is a focus on identifying significant factors leading to the disruption, enable everyone to share feelings and information about what happened. Gather information about future planning for the child and how to make sure they are prepared for their move.

- During 2020/21 the Review and Development Unit carried out a review of a sample of Disruption Meetings and found some key themes;
- All 10 children reviewed were 11+
- COVID-19 and lockdown had an impact on the stability for 50% of those reviewed
- Some of our children were affected when another child was moved into their home, the disruption meetings found that the impact on the child was not always fully considered (40%)
- Some found that changes in allocated Social Worker for the child had an impact (40%)
- Some of our children would have benefited from therapeutic support, which had not been in place (30%)
- Some carers felt that they were not fully prepared with all available information when the child moved in with them to understand their story (30%)
- Some carers had outlined support that they had asked for but not received (30%)
- There are less instances, but some disruptions meetings found; an advocate would have been beneficial, pre-disruption or stability meetings would have helped to support the placement, respite care could have been explored. In 10% (1 review in the same) it was found that the Foster Carer required additional training, the child did not feel listened to, and the child's plan was not clear.

Throughout 2020/21 there has been work undertaken to strengthen the support for children who are at risk of an unplanned home move, this is supported by updated procedure and guidance for staff to ensure that where support is needed and stability meetings are required, they take place in a timely way.

What we want to improve for Children in Care

We want children to have plans of permanence as early as possible, and to be part of developing their own plan. This means that IROs make sure that children's views are always meaningfully considered and that where children are willing/able to, they attend their review and co-chair.

We want all children (at least 95%) to be seen before their review by their IRO, as well as keeping in touch between reviews to make sure that children and young people benefit from having a relationship with their IRO. For children who are not living in their forever home, this should be more often so that the IRO knows that the plan for the child is progressing, and if it's not, then this can be addressed as soon as possible.

We want IROs to raise issues (using the Issues Resolution Process) when there are concerns about the timeliness and quality of all plans for children, this includes care plans for permanence, EHCPs, PEPs and Health plans. In order to do this we want IROs to always carry out IRO Monitoring Tools as part of each review process. We want these tools to make a difference for each child individually, and collectively be used to raise areas of good practice, or areas of improvement.

IROs will be working on making sure everyone who cares for you and works with you has high aspirations for you, which means have high hope, dreams and goals for you and help you to reach them. If IROs make recommendations about what should happen for you, they need to make sure they are SMART too.

What have children and young people told us about the IRO service?

My IRO is great I have had her for a while now and she always makes sure I'm heard and my wishes are pushed forward. I think the IRO system is very useful - CHILD

I felt as if it was good I liked the service given I felt as if I could talk about my issues or needs fine. And any issues I had were dealt with fairly quickly in my opinion it was good and I appreciate it a lot - CHILD

My IRO is great because she listens to my ideas and takes them in. She is very friendly so we can have good conversations. She talks to me about my family and how I am coping with my family in my house. About my family, she talks about them in a way that I don't get upset. And my family at home, she doesn't just ask about me she asks about how the other boys are and how we are coping. We also have random conversations about life instead of just family and care things. I think Claire is a really good IRO CHILD

Our IRO, she is a good IRO because she is friendly and we can feel comfortable with asking her anything we want to. When we ask questions she doesn't always answer, but then goes on to find out the answer. I have asked her questions about my brothers and sisters, which she answered but others she had to find out.

Altogether, I think she is a good IRO, she usually answers our questions and helps us get a new Social Worker if we need one. CHILD

Our IRO she is absolutely amazing she listens to you but also she will tell you when you're doing something wrong etc. we have been lucky enough to have Beth for years now I honestly can't thank her enough not just for doing the reviews but she is always there for (US – Brothers & Sisters) too she makes them feel at ease with her she always makes sure things are done & checks up on the progress of things that haven't been completed yet she deserves some recognition for the hard work she does. I don't think she realises how much she helps people especially from the child's side she is the best IRO. If I could give her a medal I would because things haven't always been easy Beth is a credit to your team can you tell her from us we will be always thankful for everything she's done for our children & our family we will be eternally grateful to her kind regards BIRTH MOTHER

Meet Children who have a Child Protection Plan

If Middlesbrough was a village of 100, 2 children would have a Child Protection Plan

Of those Children subject to a Child Protection Plan...

55
are Males



45
are Females

Based on CP Population



29

Children on a Child Protection Plan are from Ethnic Minorities

Based on CP Population



Based on CP Population

● Under 1 ● 1-4 ● 5-9 ● 10-15 ● 16 & over

48

Children have a Child Protection Plan under the Category of Neglect



Children have a Child Protection Plan under the Category of Emotional Abuse

46

4

Children have a Child Protection Plan under the Category of Physical Abuse



Children have a Child Protection Plan under the Category of Sexual Abuse

2

Based on CP Population

Performance of IROs for Child Protection Chairs

17

Children have had more than 1 Child Protection Plan



Based on CP Population



65

Children had their ICPC in timescale



3

Children have been on a Child Protection Plan for over 2 years



Based on CP Population

69
Children had their RCPC in timescale



Based on CP Population

811 ICPC's & 432 RCPC's were held between 2020-2021

Based on CP Population



Key Messages about our Children with a Child Protection Plan

There are 17 out of every 100 children in Middlesbrough who have a child protection plan. If you are a child in Middlesbrough with a child protection plan you are more likely to be male than female (55%) and you are most likely aged between 10-15 years old. You are likely to be white British, however 29% are from ethnic minorities.

You are most likely to be at risk of or suffering neglect (48%) or emotional abuse (46%). You are less likely to have a child protection plan because of physical (4%) or sexual abuse (2%). If you are 1 of 100 children who have had a child protection plan, it's possible that you would have 1 or more child protection plans (17%). Your child protection plan should not last more than 2 years (3% have).

Your child protection conference, where the decision is made whether you are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm should take place within 15-days of the decision being made to investigate harm. Your initial child protection conference had 65% chance of happening in time. Once you have a child protection plan it needs to be regularly reviewed, it will have been reviewed on time 69% of the time.

You are not likely to attend your child protection conference, this is something we want to work towards, to make child protection conferences accessible for children and young people who would benefit from being there.

What does Audit tell us about Child Protection Practice?

Audit to Excellence have checked the quality of Child Protection conferences in Middlesbrough. In December 2020. Overall they found that 90% require improvement to be good or better. There isn't an outline plan before the meeting, this is developed in the conference. There is good attendance from parents but sometimes parents are not given the reports to read in advance, almost all of the conferences included fathers and other relevant males. Children's voice is heard but not always about the child protection plan or conference. All of the Initial Child Protection conferences were well attended by professionals. Safety plans were discussed. The minutes were well written and very detailed. Everyone present, including parents were involved in analysing risk and use a 'scale' to measure this, however we could be better if everyone shared what they think needs to happen to move up the scale.

Quality assurance for Child Protection

If you are a child living in Middlesbrough and you have a child protection plan, your Child Protection Chair (CP Chair/IRO) is also responsible for quality assurance. To do this they complete a 'Monitoring Tool'. These are saved on your record and if your conference chair has any worries they will use this tool to share with your Social Worker and their Manager so that things can be resolved for you.

The Monitoring Tool is being used more often but not yet 100% of the time, there are more monitoring tools being completed for children with a protection plan than children who are in our care. When IROs have completed these tools they tell us that;

When your initial child protections conferences were held out of timescales, this was often because of 'staffing' issues, such as IRO, Social Worker or minute taker absence. At one point in December 2020 this was a significant worry so we dealt with this quickly by bringing in more IROs and Minute Takers to help out. We aim for 95% of all conferences taking place in timescales, 65% were in timescales this year.

To make sure that no child's conference is held late, if it can be avoided, all decisions to re-arrange conferences are made by Heads of Service.

We found that when information was shared about you at your conference it was good on most occasions (86%) but that sometimes it is not shared soon enough for everyone to feel fully prepared. IROs also found that your views were clear in most conferences (74%) but not all. When your views are not heard you are not always being asked if you would like an advocate (NYAS).

It is the responsibility of everyone involved in your plan to meet every month and have a 'Core Group Meeting'. The Monitoring Tool found that these are not always happening and of those checks completed by the IRO only 27% had regular meetings. These meetings are important to make sure your plan is on track, it's also a chance to make any slight changes if for some reason the plan is not yet working.

When IROs are worried about children with a child protection plan they can raise the issue through the same Issues Resolution Process that we use for children in our care. Last year there was 52 issues raised by IROs. On most occasions this was due to their worry about the quality of practice, on some but less occasions this is due to procedures not being followed or worries about whether a plan was keeping children safe.

What we want to improve for our Children with a Child Protection Plan

We want all children to have a child protection in conference in timescales, unless there is exceptional circumstances (so 95% of the time). When the conference takes place, we want everyone to feel properly prepared, particularly parents and the child. We want children to feel able to attend and speak at their conference, but if this isn't possible we want to make sure that children's views are gathered by professionals or an advocate and meaningfully contribute to the conference.

We want to make sure that between conferences your conference chair continues to check on the progress of plans, and if there is any worries about the plan not achieving the agreed outcomes, then the IRO will swiftly raise an issue. It's important this is done in a constructive way as a critical friend, working with the Social Worker and other professionals to address issues as early as possible for children. This will include making sure that Core Group Meetings happen regularly.

We want children to have child protection plans that quickly make a positive difference, this means we will have less children with plans that last over 15-months. We also want less children to have more than 1 child protection plan.

To achieve our goals for children with a protection plan we will hold regular challenge clinics to increase oversight from Managers and Senior Managers. These clinics help us to understand any patterns in practice that we might need to change. During 2020/21 there has been challenge clinics on;

- Children with a protection plan over 15-months
- Children who have had more than 1 protection plan.

Child Protection Plans over 15 Months

What are current trends telling us?

- There was an increase in number of children subject to a Protection Plans
- The majority of plans (72%) had started in the past 6-months
- 6% had been in place for over 18 months
- <1% had been in place for over 2-years

What are we doing about this?

When children are identified as being at risk of continuing significant harm, they are made subject to a child protection plan, this significant harm might be physical, sexual, emotional harm or neglect. A child will no longer remain subject to a protection plan once they are no longer at risk of significant harm. Middlesbrough aims to have children on a protection plan for as short a time as possible as targeted interventions should be effective in reducing the risk of significant harm and protecting the child. The Challenge Clinic was put in place additional scrutiny for those 7% of children over 18 months to ensure that they are not experiencing drift and delay.

A summary of the findings;

- 85% of those children were also subject to Pre-Proceedings (PLO). Those who were not, the decision was the right one for the children.
- 38% of children have had more than one period of child protection, their most recent now exceeding 18-months. Neglect is a common theme amongst these children. All of these children are subject to pre-proceedings (PLO).
- Neglect is the most common category of abuse, emotional abuse was 2nd. This reflects the wider population of all children subject to a protection plan.
- There was no particular theme in relation to risk factors identified, although parental substance misuse was identified in 40%. Domestic abuse, Parental Mental Health and CSE were evident in 20%
- What was evident in the challenge clinic was the absence of a Single Assessment giving clear direction for a plan to be built upon. The outcome of panel for 60% of families was for an updated assessment to be complete that fully explores risk, life for the child and is presented either to the review conference or gateway panel for a multi-agency decision regarding risk and/or legal action.

2nd or Subsequent Child Protection

Why is it important?

A second or subsequent child protection plan is not necessarily a concern in itself because it may reflect a new risk of significant harm to a child that had not existed previously.

However, the majority of children subject to a protection plan in Middlesbrough are under the categories of neglect (then 55%) then emotional abuse (then 35%). When children experience neglect patterns can emerge showing that care fluctuates and at times falls above and below the threshold of significant harm, for these children protection plans may end and re-start. What is important is ensuring that children are not experiencing prolonged cumulative neglect that is harmful to their welfare and development in the long-term.

In Middlesbrough there is a contributing factors for the increase in social care activity and neglect which is the impact of recent OFSTED inspection in November 2019 on thresholds for child protection.

What are the trends telling us and what are we doing about it?

A challenge clinic took place on 2nd July 2020 with a focus on children who have been subject to more than one protection plan with an initial focus on those whose previous plan was in the past 2-years. There is some evidence that this cohort of children are experiencing fluctuating care with similar re-emerging concerns.

- 17 children were identified, this is 9 sibling groups.
- Some children have had 3 child protection plans (41%) but most (59%) had 2 children protection plans ever.
- The category of neglect is a common theme amongst these children (52%). Where children have had 3 protection plans under the category of neglect, the clinic found that risks were re-occurring and not new risks.
- 12% of children had multiple categories of emotional abuse and neglect but on both occasions the risks were relating to domestic abuse between parents.
- 6% had 2 plans both under the category of emotional abuse, both related to risk posed by a parent and demonstrate reoccurring issues.
- All but one of the children reviewed were deemed to be supported at the right level. Most, but not all children, were also subject to Pre-proceedings work through Public Law Outline (PLO). Following the review the Head of Service gave direction for 1 family to be discussed at Legal Gateway Panel.
- Actions arising from Panel, for most children, was to update assessments.

What is the Issues Resolution Process telling us?



The process we follow to resolve care planning issues (known as the **Issues Resolution Process**) was updated in September 2020 to;

- Ensure roles and responsibilities of everyone are clear
- Increase Management oversight at all levels
- Seek to resolve matters earlier for our children



Impact on Children and young people

Challenge has increased by
70%

84%

were resolved within timescale
(up from 77% last year)

More challenge is resolved at
a lower level

IRO Monitoring & Quality Assurance



25% increase in IRO audits for children in

306% increase for children subject to a

Quality of IRO Challenge;

- ⇒ Some IROs demonstrate persistence in posing difficult questions and seeking answers to unresolved care planning matters
- ⇒ Some individual IROs display persistence, can exhibit strong challenge and veracity in the face of errant standards of practice by the corporate parent.
- ⇒ IRO escalations need to be more effective at achieving meaningful substantive change to care planning decisions. IROs are effective at highlighting an issue, however the issue is closed down when a superficial or basic level of compliance is shown with the demand.
- ⇒ IROs need to show in their independent review, audit and challenge that they have high aspirations for our children

What IRO Challenge tells us about the experience of children in care

The most common reason for IRO challenge is drift and delay, this can mean a range of things from delay in providing a service to a child that is outlined on their Child Protection Plan or delay in achieving a plan of permanence for children in our care. Concerns about drift and delay make up over 51% of all IRO challenges.

Secondly, IRO challenge tells us that procedures are not always followed. Examples of this include; mean the way a child or their placement has been assessed and supported is not in line with our procedures, or that multi-agency meetings are not taking place to review the child's plans.

Other, less common reasons for raising challenge are concerns about a child's placement (home) or issues around quality of the recording on the child's file.

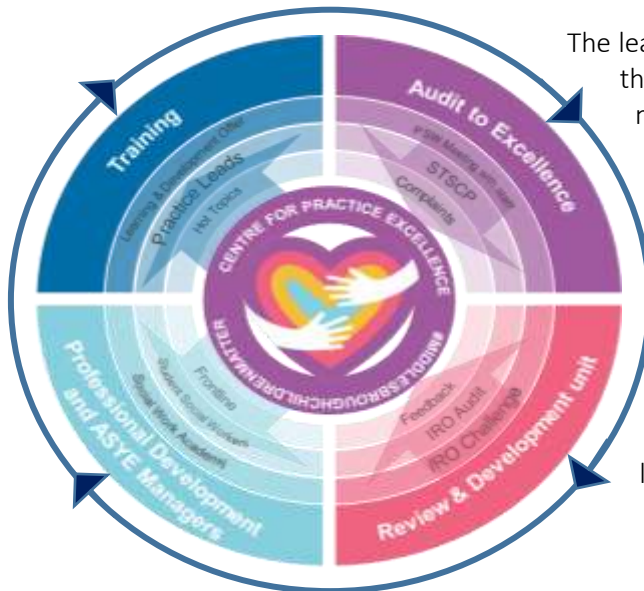
The Learning Loop

Individual Learning



Following an IRO Audit or issue being raised through the Issues Resolution Process, the agreed actions/issues are recorded on the child's file and where appropriate a plan of action is agreed to address the issues. This is then monitored by the IRO, IRO Team Managers on a weekly basis to ensure those actions are completed. When this is not achieved the issue will be escalated to a higher level. In 2019/20 challenge was more often than not resolved with Heads of Service as it was unsuccessful at stage 1 (Social Worker) and Stage 2 (Team Manager). However, during 2020/21 challenge is more often resolved at Stage 2.

Whole Service Learning



The learning from all of the audits and issues raised formally through the Issues Resolution Process are analysed on a monthly basis. This allows us to understand themes arising from practice that need to be addressed with the whole service rather than on an individual level. The monthly analysis is shared at Director's Quality and Performance Clinics and the Principal Social Worker's 'Learning Meeting'. The purpose of the Learning Meeting is to bring together learning from all areas of service including audit, complaints, the South Tees Safeguarding Partnership (CSPR) and ensure that we have targeted training and practice lead support in for our staff in Children's Services.

An Example of the impact an IRO challenge made for a child

As a Child Protection Chair for one of our young people I became worried that professionals felt the plan should end because the young person didn't want to work with professionals (wasn't engaging with their plan).

After the conference I completed a CP Monitoring Tool which highlighted that this young person had not been seen recently, I raised my worries straight away with the Social Worker and Team Manager.

I went to see the young person who did not look well and was sofa surfing, smoking cannabis and had no food in the home.

I followed the IRO Issues Resolution Process and action was taken straight away to improve things for the young person. This young person became looked after. Housing issues were addressed and now this young person is in full-time education. This young person is working really well with his Social Worker, has a professional support network around them until they are 25.

An example of where IRO challenge made to the whole service

Concerns were raised by IROs about Unborn babies being presented to ICPC late which limits the effectiveness of any assessment and intervention undertaken pre-birth to support the baby, and their family. This was shared with the Heads of Service in Children's Services and discussed at the Learning Meeting for further analysis and understanding of the issue. Following that, an audit team was set up to carry out a thematic audit on safeguarding unborn babies. The outcome identified that learning which is now being addressed through a Partnership training "Safeguarding Vulnerable Babies" coordinated by the Principal Social Worker with learning from audit, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, IRO feedback and national Born into Care Review.

Partnership Working

Partnership working is critical to the function of the Review and Development Unit. In order to strengthen relationships across the Partnership the Service Manager for the Review and Development Unit chairs a Safeguarding Networking Forum. The aim of this group is to bring partners together at an operational level, to share information, discuss service updates, identify any barriers to good practice and address these together. Examples of where this has worked well is a multi-agency approach to developing a practice standard for allocation, handover and ending involvements with children and young people to minimise impact on the child and how agencies work together. The group is also in the process of developing some multi-agency guidance for Schools on how to respond to Operation Encompass.

As well as working with local Partners, the Review and Development unit has strong links with the 12 authorities in the North East. There is a shared work plan, training and a Regional Conference is being planned for 2021/22.

Feedback from Partners

"All IRO's I have dealt with have all been professional and welcoming to the families that have been involved in ICPC's. All ICPC's have been well structured from the beginning until the end of ICPC, with a very clear understanding of what the ICPC will entail of, which is important for parents/ carers to understand. When I have attended joint ICPC's one thing I would recommend is to try and shorten these in regards to what information is shared as these can be a very long process. Overall a positive experience".

"The voice of the child and parents have always been considered throughout all meetings that I have attended. IROs have been confident to challenge professionals and parents when needed, I have found that a number of Middlesbrough IRO's are able to pull back on conversations which are escalating which may result in the focus of the child being lost and not being made central to the discussion".

"I have found that IROs within the Middlesbrough district are knowledgeable which I feel reflects well on their experience within the social care field. All meetings that I have attended for Middlesbrough, IRO's are clearly well prepared for the meeting all appear to gain an insight into the background of the family, what's happening and what needs to happen to help families move forward. In addition, I have found that the IRO's are adaptive in the way they work which has helped overcome barriers of communication for parent/carers and children if they have been present".

“The IRO service are a very supportive one of what we are trying to achieve, if they know a young person is struggling they will ring to see if they have been referred and if a referral hasn’t been picked up they want to see it so they can understand the context as to why this hasn’t happened. They have the young people at the heart of everything they do and challenge where challenge is needed.”

At futures for families we have completed over 40 Deep Dives and whilst there are many challenges and areas we can improve the consistent lesson that is learnt from the Deep Dives is that the turnover of IROs is low and that young people’s constant person seems to be the IRO, they know that young person journey in great detail”.

Summary & Priorities for 2021/22

The Review and Development unit continues to work hard to serve the children of Middlesbrough, throughout 2020/21 this has come with a number of challenges. There has been a significant increase in demand for the number of children who have been presented to Initial Child Protection Conferences as well as an increase in children who are in our care, we have unfortunately seen that there has been a decline in timeliness of statutory meetings taking place as a result of the increase in demand and staff being at capacity. We have also had to dramatically change the way we work through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the ongoing challenges throughout 2021 the Review and Development unit has worked hard on practice improvement. The team has a strong commitment to a learning culture. Since April 2021 we have seen improvements in the quality of practice across children’s Social Care and IRO Service. We have seen improvements key areas of performance, timeliness of all statutory meetings (initial and review child protection conferences and looked after reviews). IROs are visiting children face to face. We have increased the use of the monitoring tool to quality assure the child’s care plan. IRO challenge remains high and there is a new monitoring process in place to ensure that these challenges have a positive impact for children and young people. Learning from IRO’s feeds directly into the Principal Social Workers monthly Learning Meeting so that support can be put in place to address practice issues arising from IRO monitoring and challenge.

The IRO improvement journey will remain closely linked to the Children’s Services Improvement Plan and our priorities for 2021/22 will be;

- Maintain compliance with KPI’s (ICPC, RCPC, CLA Review timeliness)
- Increase child participation, including visits before reviews
- Mid-way reviews for all children is a minimum standard, with increased continuous oversight for those without stability and permanence
- Increased scrutiny and challenge when permanence is not achieved in a timely way
- Strengthen the impact of IRO Challenge and demonstrate IROs have high aspirations for Middlesbrough children
- Create specialisms within the IRO Service, to better support particular groups of children i.e. care leavers, unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- Increase support and feedback mechanisms for parents
- IROs contribute to overall practice priorities by monitoring quality of performance

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Briefing Paper for the Corporate Parenting Board 30th November 2021

South Tees Youth Offending Service

Introduction

This Briefing paper provides the Corporate Parenting Board with an annual update from South Tees Youth Offending Service (STYOS). The focus of this report will be upon the STYOS offer to children and young people who are looked after along with key developments and achievements in the last twelve months.

National Context

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) for England and Wales is an independent public body appointed by the Secretary of State for Justice, who have a statutory responsibility to oversee the whole of the youth justice system. The YJB published their Strategic plan 2021-2024 in October 2021 and the document outlines their vision, mission statement, and three strategic priorities which are underpinned by the central guiding principle of a 'Child First' youth justice system.

The YJB are clear that the justice system must see "*children as children first, and offenders second*". In line with the Child First vision, the YJB wants to make sure that children are not unnecessarily criminalised as a result of their vulnerabilities and the challenges they face.

In order to achieve these strategic aims, Youth Offending Service's are required to produce a Youth Justice Plan each year which details their local priorities. South Tees Youth Offending Service has developed a strategic youth justice plan for 2021-22 aligned to the values of the YJB, and as part of this will look to embed the child first principle in to operational practice.

Youth Offending Service's have three key strategic priorities on which they are measured;

- To reduce first time entrants to the youth justice system
- To prevent re-offending by children and young people
- Reduce the use of custody for young people (both sentenced and remanded)

Quarterly performance data is returned to the YJB in relation to the three national outcome measures, and also reported to the STYOS Management Board along with a number of other performance indicators.

Local context

South Tees Youth Offending Service is a dual authority service hosted by Middlesbrough Council. STYOS sits within Middlesbrough Council Children's Services, within the Education and Partnerships directorate and is a statutory partnership between the local authority, Police, Probation, Education and Health. The service has a range of statutory responsibilities and supervises young people between the ages of 10 and 18 on a range of Court ordered

interventions, Out of Court Disposals and those who receive custodial sentences. In the last twelve months the service has also introduced a prevention offer to those at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice arena.

STYOS Caseload demographic

STYOS closely monitor their caseload demographic and this is reported to the YOS Management Board on a quarterly basis. The role of the Management Board is to provide strategic direction and challenge to the YOS management team on service delivery and development, provide accountability for the performance of the service, and challenge partners with regards to their commitments to STYOS, including financial and resource commitments.

The most recent information is shown below in the table below;

Caseload demographic April to September 2021;

		Percentage of Total		
		Female	Male	All
Gender	All cases	11.3%	88.7%	100.0%
	Population Estimate	48.5%	51.5%	100.0%
		Percentage of Gender		
	Asian	0.0%	2.1%	1.9%
	Black	0.0%	1.6%	1.4%
	Chinese	0.0%	1.6%	1.4%
	Mixed	0.0%	5.3%	4.7%
	Not Known	8.3%	2.6%	3.3%
	Other	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	White	91.7%	86.8%	87.3%
Ethnicity	All	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Percentage of Gender		
	10-13	29.2%	18.0%	19.2%
	14	20.8%	14.3%	15.0%
	15	25.0%	14.8%	16.0%
	16	12.5%	22.2%	21.1%
	17+	12.5%	30.7%	28.6%
Age	All	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Yes	29.2%	13.8%	15.5%
LAC	No	70.8%	86.2%	84.5%

This table shows that the majority of young people who have been open to the service within this six month time frame were white British boys aged 17, 15% of whom were looked after children.

The profile of the types of offences committed by young people and the factors impacting on the offending by young people are detailed in the STYOS Youth Justice Plan.

STYOS offer to Children Looked After

STYOS have strong partnership arrangements with children's safeguarding services at strategic and operational levels and engage at a managerial level at a number of multi-agency forums designed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people.

Reducing the number of Children who are Looked After in the criminal justice system is a key priority for STYOS. To achieve this STYOS offer a range of additional activity for Children who are looked after;

- Work with Cleveland Police and Children's Home staff to ensure those young people in Children's Homes who offend have their offending behaviour addressed appropriately, including the use of restorative intervention as a solution to minimise prosecution
- Ensure active STYOS attendance at all planning or strategy meetings for young people with CLA status
- STYOS safeguarding case managers provide an essential link to Children's Services teams in both Local Authorities as well as providing advice and guidance to colleagues on safeguarding issues and processes.
- Ensure all Intervention Plans for CLA are shared with young people, their carers and colleagues from Children's Services
- Developed joint supervision arrangements between STYOS and Middlesbrough Children's Services offering the opportunity to share decision making and agree strategies to meet the needs of young people known to both services.
- Developed a working agreement between STYOS and Early Help to ensure joint planning and supervision arrangements are in place, the aim being to reduce escalation in the criminal justice and / or looked after system by working collaboratively.
- Arrangements are now in place for YOS single points of contact for the Multi Agency Children's Hub. This offers key points of contact for MACH staff to contact for information and advice on young people known to STYOS.
- MACH case admin have access to STYOS case management system 'Childview' this allows for checks to be made as a referral is received by the MACH to ascertain if the case is open to STYOS and ensure that joint working commences at the earliest opportunity.
- Reciprocal arrangements are in place to offer access to case management systems and this allows YOS staff to access these systems to identify if new referrals are known to children's services and to access information. STYOS staff log new referrals into individual children's files where they are open to safeguarding teams and this ensures effective communication and joint working.

Key developments in the last 12 months

STYOS were inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) in 2019, which resulted in the service being rated as 'Good' with elements of outstanding. There were no specific recommendations relating to children who were looked after, however HMIP did recommend that *'there is specialist education provision, in the Youth Offending Service to*

meet the needs of children and young people who are not accessing suitable education'. The link between education and YOS is key as we know there is a risk of 'NEET' young people becoming involved in criminality.

In addition to ensuring there is now representation from Education senior leaders on the YOS Management Board, there have been three key developments in the last 12 months Firstly, STYOS have strengthened the relationship with the Virtual school and have developed a joint protocol. There is now a formal process where information on all new YOS start orders are shared with the Virtual school with the aim of improving communication, build on joint working and supporting the Virtual school to create robust Personal Education Plans. As a result of this protocol young people are now identified and support is offered at an earlier point, information sharing is improved and there have been positive outcomes for some young people placed in to training/college.

Another key development specifically relating to children looked after is the 'Child Looked After Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) forum'. In the last year, an information sharing agreement between Middlesbrough Council and Middlesbrough College has been written which enables Looked After Children to be supported by the College to reduce their risk of becoming NEET. YOS were instrumental in establishing this forum and writing the governance process.

A Joint Custody protocol has also been written for those young people who are given custodial sentences, with the aim of ensuring a smooth transition for between the community and custodial establishment. The protocol aims to improve information flow, and robust planning for resettlement.

Future risks and challenges

The environment in which we work continues to be very difficult and challenging with financial pressures across public services impacting on our budget. The young people we work with present with high levels of needs as well as presenting greater risk to the public and the communities we serve.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought about challenges to service delivery. However, throughout the pandemic STYOS continued to conduct joint visits with Social Worker's, attend joint supervisions and strategy meetings, and continued to provide appropriate adult services to young people in police custody and to those young people attending Court. Although Covid initially impacted upon how we engaged with young people, staff, and partner agencies forcing digital solutions to be utilised during lockdown periods, there were some benefits to using technology and this will continue in how we interact with young people and partners going forwards, alongside the direct face to face work. Should there be any further lockdowns/restrictions STYOS has the digital solutions in place to work effectively including the Cloud Video Platform (CVP), which offers the facility for young people to 'attend' Court virtually from a Police station and is available at Teesside Youth Court in future if required.

Developing our understanding and responding to the risks presented by young people at risk of or involved in serious violent crime and exploitation is one of our current strategic priorities. Discussions around the potential impact of these issues on our practice and the young people we work have been undertaken although there is no easy solution to tackling this issue, and will need careful consideration of how we can work with partners to develop a response.

Re-offending by young people continues to be a challenge for the YOS and its partners. The cohort of young people that we track in 2021-22 is now the smallest cohort ever, half the number of the cohort for 2020-21 and this will create pressures as it will only take a small

number of young people to re-offend to impact on performance in this area. We will continue to monitor this using our live tracker tools and offer an appropriate response to those young people we identify as priority offenders.

STYOS introduced a preventions offer during 2020-2021 to offer support to young people and their families and divert them away from offending and anti social behaviour. This service has been created using existing resources through our case management and support worker team. There are concerns around the capacity and sustainability of this model given the high demand for the service, and in order to sustain the service it may be necessary to seek additional funding.

Kay Dargue
Head of South Tees Youth Offending Service
10th November 2021

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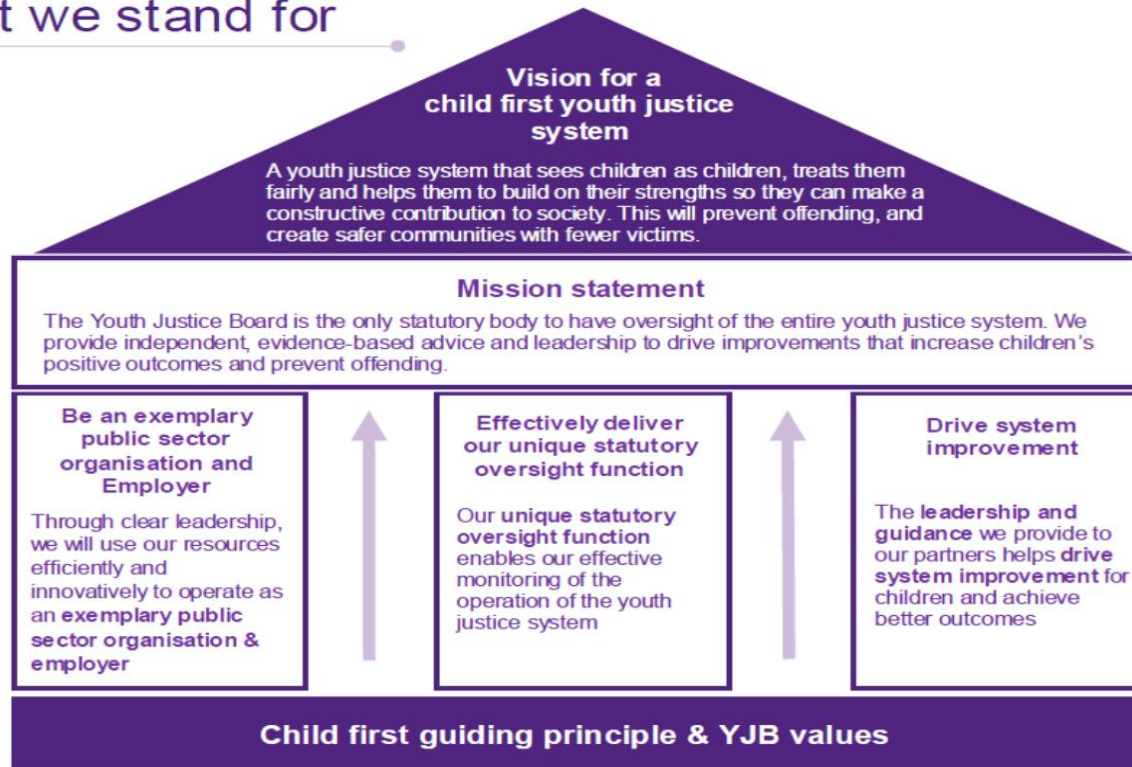
Work with Looked After Children

Annual update presentation to the Corporate
Parenting Board 30th November 2021

Kay Dargue
Head of South Tees Youth Offending Service

National context

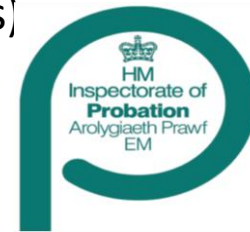
What we do and what we stand for



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Who we are and what we do

- Youth offending teams (YOTs) supervise 10–18-year-olds who have been sentenced by a court, or who have come to the attention of the police because of their offending behaviour but have not been charged – instead, they were dealt with out of court (Out Of Court Disposal).
- YOTs are statutory partnerships, and are multidisciplinary, to deal with the needs of the whole child.
- We are required to have staff from local authority social care and education, the police, the National Probation Service and local health services
- The Youth Justice Board (YJB) provides some funding to YOTs. The YJB also monitors our performance and issues guidance about how things are to be done (for example National Standards)
- HMIP are our regulating body



STYOS 2021-22 Youth Justice Plan



Youth Justice Plan 2021-2022

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The 2021-2022 Youth Justice Plan was submitted to the YJB in June 21. The Plan details:

- YOS Performance 2020-21
- The YOS Budget for 2021-22
- Details of Service Structures
- Staffing Arrangements
- Partnership Arrangements
- Risks to Service Delivery
- Service Priorities for 2021-22

Caseload demographic

April to September 2021

		Percentage of Total		
		Female	Male	All
Gender	All cases	11.3%	88.7%	100.0%
	Population Estimate	48.5%	51.5%	100.0%
		Percentage of Gender		
	Asian	0.0%	2.1%	1.9%
	Black	0.0%	1.6%	1.4%
	Chinese	0.0%	1.6%	1.4%
	Mixed	0.0%	5.3%	4.7%
	Not Known	8.3%	2.6%	3.3%
	Other	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	White	91.7%	86.8%	87.3%
Ethnicity	All	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		Percentage of Gender		
	10-13	29.2%	18.0%	19.2%
	14	20.8%	14.3%	15.0%
	15	25.0%	14.8%	16.0%
	16	12.5%	22.2%	21.1%
	17+	12.5%	30.7%	28.6%
Age	All	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Yes	29.2%	13.8%	15.5%
LAC	No	70.8%	86.2%	84.5%

STYOS 'offer' to Children Looked After

- Work with care home staff and Police to identify appropriate responses to young people who offend in residential settings, including the use of restorative intervention as a solution to challenging behaviours
- Ensure active STYOS attendance at all planning or strategy meetings for young people with CLA status

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STYOS safeguarding case managers provide an essential link to Children's Services teams in both Local Authorities as well as providing advice and guidance to colleagues on safeguarding issues and processes.

- Ensure all Intervention Plans for CLA are shared with young people, their carers and colleagues from Children's Services
- Developed joint supervision arrangements between STYOS and Middlesbrough Children's Services

STYOS 'offer' to Children Looked After

- Developed a working agreement between STYOS and Early Help to ensure joint planning and supervision arrangements are in place, the aim being to reduce escalation in the criminal justice and / or looked after system by working collaboratively.
- STYOS provide a 'single points of contact' for the Multi Agency Children's Hub to provide information and advice on young people known to STYOS.

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Reciprocal arrangements are in place to offer access to case management systems and this allows the MACH to ascertain if the case is open to STYOS and/or YOS staff to systems to identify if new referrals are known to children's services and ensure that joint working commences at the earliest opportunity.

Key Developments in the last year

- STYOS have strengthened the relationship with the Virtual school and have developed a joint protocol. This joint working improves communication and supports the Virtual school to create robust Personal Education Plans, and enables young people to be identified for support at an earlier point.
- CLA 'NEET' forum – Information Sharing Agreement in place with Middlesbrough College has been written which enables Looked After Children to be supported by the College to reduce their risk of becoming NEET.
- Joint Custody protocol - for young people who are given custodial sentences. Protocol aims to improve information flow, and robust planning in place to improve the transition between the community and custodial establishment to aid resettlement.

What difference does this make to our CLA?

- STYOS recognises the needs to offer an 'over and above' service to our Looked After Children
 - Caseloads are monitored to ensure we do not have over representation in the criminal justice system
 - Systems and processes in place to robustly manage our CLA in our service
- Collaborative and joined up work with partners. Protocols and joint working arrangements ensure clear lines of accountability.
- Young people are offered a good service, appropriate to their need and supported by trained, skilled professionals

Challenges and next steps

- Covid – adapted ways of working with our young people, and will continue to ensuring the right digital solutions are in place.
- Developing our understanding and responding to the risks presented by young people at risk of or involved in serious violent crime and exploitation.

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Prevention – longer term sustainability of the current model to divert young people including CLA away from the criminal justice system

Embed the positive developments in ETE and monitor the impact of this work

- Progress will be monitored via YOS Management, YOS Board and YJB.