

EXECUTIVE

Date: Tuesday 6th September, 2022
Time: 1.00 pm
Venue: Mandela Room

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest
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THE MAYOR

4. Corporate Performance Update: Quarter one 2022/23 5 - 34

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

5. Revenue and Capital Budget – Projected Outturn position as at Quarter One 2022/23 35 - 70
6. Proposal to progress the development of Nunthorpe Community Centre 71 - 78

EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR REGENERATION

7. Increasing Enforcement Against Problem Properties 79 - 88
8. Nunthorpe Neighbourhood Area Application 89 - 108

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

9. Final Report of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) - Service Response 109 - 158

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| 10. | Final Report of the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel - Locality Working from a Children's Services Perspective - Service Response | 159 - 206 |
| 11. | Final Report of the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel - Sufficiency and Permanency (Perceptions of Children in Care) | 207 - 292 |
| 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
Friday 26 August 2022

MEMBERSHIP

Mayor A Preston (Chair) B Cooper, D Coupe, TA Grainge, S Hill, L Mason, E Polano, M Smiles and S Walker

Assistance in accessing information

Should you have any queries on accessing the Agenda and associated information please contact Chris Lunn / Scott Bonner, 01642 729742 / 01642 729708, chris_lunn@middlesbrough.gov.uk / scott_bonner@middlesbrough.gov.uk

EXECUTIVE

A meeting of the Executive was held on Wednesday 3 August 2022.

PRESENT: Mayor A Preston (Chair) and Councillors B Cooper, D Coupe, L Mason, E Polano, M Smiles and S Walker

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors C Dodds, C Hobson and J Hobson

OFFICERS: C Benjamin, S Bonner, S Fletcher, C Lunn and H Seechurn

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors TA Grainge and S Hill

22/23 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

22/24 **MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 12 JULY 2022**

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 12 July 2022 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

22/25 **MAYORAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION – CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

The Executive Member for Regeneration and the Director for Regeneration and Culture submitted a report for the Executive's consideration. The purpose of the report was to seek Executive approval for the Council's response to the stakeholder consultation which was due to close on 4 August 2022.

The Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) had indicated that it wished to establish a Mayoral Development Corporation covering Middlesbrough Town Centre and Middlehaven.

One of the first stages of the process to establish such a vehicle was to consult with stakeholders. A public consultation on the subject was therefore opened, with a deadline for responses of 4 August 2022. The Executive was asked to endorse the Council's response, as the establishment of such a corporation would have a significant impact on both the town and the Council.

The report set out the principles of the Council's response to the consultation, so it could be submitted by the required deadline.

The overall tone of the consultation response was one of broad support, but with requests to be involved in some of the detail being developed around specific powers. The response also set out that the Mayoral Development Corporation must not have a detrimental impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

The response to the consultation had been considered by officers, including those involved in the early stages of the Mayoral Development Corporation process from a finance and governance perspective. A positive endorsement from Executive would have seen the Council's response submitted by the 4th August deadline.

Members commented that consideration should be given to the impact on Council Planning Services and Council Assets, should the Mayoral Development Corporation be created. The Mayor advised the details surrounding the Mayoral Development Corporation had yet to be finalised but thanked Members for their input.

OPTIONS

If the Council was not broadly supportive of the establishment of such a corporation, the responses would be significantly different. It would also be necessary to engage with TVCA to challenge the principles being set out.

A decision to oppose a corporation would have needed to consider the ability of the Council and its existing partners to deliver the regeneration of the town centre and Middlehaven, and whether it would achieve as much, as quickly. Although a significant amount would still be achieved, there was no evidence to suggest that this would exceed what would be achieved with a Mayoral Development Corporation in place.

ORDERED

That the Council's response to the stakeholder consultation be endorsed for submission by 4 August 2022.

REASON

The consultation offered the Council the opportunity to register its broad support, but also to flag up the areas where it was felt significant further work was to be done to fully understand the future relationship with the corporation, and how it would operate.

As this decision was taken under Special Urgency provisions it is not subject to Call-In procedures, and will therefore be implemented with immediate effect.

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	
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Report of:	The Elected Mayor of Middlesbrough; Chief Executive
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Submitted to:	Executive
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Date:	6 September 2022
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Title:	Corporate Performance Update: Quarter One 2022/23
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Report for:	Decision
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Status:	Public
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Strategic priority:	All
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Key decision:	No
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Why:	Choose an item.
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Urgent:	No
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Why:	
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Executive summary
<p>This report advises the Executive of corporate performance at the end of Quarter One 2022/23, providing the necessary information to enable the Executive to discharge its performance management responsibilities and where appropriate, seeks approval of any changes (where these lie within the authority of the Executive).</p> <p>This report also asks that the Executive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approves the proposed amendments to Executive actions outlined at Appendix 1. • notes progress of delivery of the Strategic Plan 2022-24 at Quarter One 2022/23, detailed in Appendix 2. • notes the Council’s updated position in relation to Strategic Risk, at Quarter One 2022/23. • notes progress of the 2022/23 Directorate Priorities at Quarter One 2022/23, detailed in Appendix 3.

Purpose

1. This report advises the Executive of corporate performance at the end of Quarter One 2022/23 and where appropriate seeks approval of any changes, where these lie within the authority of the Executive.

Background and relevant information

2. The Council's Scheme of Delegation gives the Executive collective responsibility for corporate strategic performance, together with associated action.
3. This report provides the necessary information to enable the Executive to discharge its performance management responsibilities, setting out progress against Executive action, the Strategic Plan and other key associated items, together with actions to be taken to address any issued identified.
4. The projected 2022/23 financial outturns are presented separately to this meeting of the Executive, and so not repeated here. Where performance has had a significant impact on finances this is highlighted within the body of the report.
5. As part of continuous improvement in performance and risk management, the Council's Leadership Management Team (LMT) has implemented monthly reviews of corporate performance utilising a Directorate Performance dashboard, drawing data from a range of performance systems.
6. The output from these sessions is reflected through quarterly updates to the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Board and covering in addition, progress in delivering actions agreed by the Executive, key Directorate performance issues and other performance-related matters.

Overall progress at Quarter One

7. The Council's performance overall at Quarter One saw positive progress in performance at Quarter One 2022/23, with progress towards expected performance standards as set out in the Council's risk appetite, achieved in five out of six areas.

Progress in delivering Executive actions

8. Actions agreed by the Executive to deliver approved decisions are tracked by LMT, monthly. If, subsequent to the Executive's approval, any action is found to be no longer feasible or appropriate, or cannot be delivered within the approved timescales, this report will be used to advise the Executive of this and seek approval of alternative actions or amended timescales.
9. At the end of Quarter One 2022/23, 62 of 66 live actions (94%) were reported as on target to be delivered by the agreed timescales, improved from the reported at 2021/22 Year End position and above the 90% standard of achievement of actions, with 4 proposed amendments for Executive approval set out at Appendix 1. All remaining Executive actions are expected to be achieved within their approved timescales.
10. Of the proposed amendments to Executive actions:

- Three relate to the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel's Final Report: Behaviour, Discipline and Bullying in Schools (Service Response) actions which have seen slight delay to ensure survey findings are included in the SEND Green Paper and final Inclusion Strategy to further enhance.
- A future report on Community Asset Transfers to be presented to Executive outlining outcome of financial appraisal and recommendations for community asset transfers, is delayed, due to changes in service area responsibility.

Progress in delivering the Strategic Plan 2022-24

11. At the 23 February 2022 meeting, Council was advised that an annual refresh for the Strategic Plan 2021-24 would not be brought forward and that as such the Strategic Plan would remain in place for 2022/23, to ensure that the Council has sufficient time to consider implications of national and potential forthcoming local changes on its strategic direction.
12. At a meeting of the Executive on 5 April 2022, the refreshed Strategic Plan workplan for the 2022-24 period and Directorate Priorities for 2022/23 was approved, which combined provide a cohesive approach to the delivery of key priority activities across Council services.
13. Progress continues to be monitored via detailed milestone plans, adhering to the corporate programme and project management framework, where applicable. Progress will continue to be reported to all senior managers and Members as part of the quarterly corporate performance results reports presented to Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Board.
14. The Strategic Plan for 2022-24, sets out nine strategic priorities for this period which are supported by an associated set of outcome measures and a workplan, which will see delivery of sustained improvement, up to and beyond 2024.

Outcomes

15. The Strategic Plan measures are the outcomes expected from successful delivery of the Strategic Plan workplan and initiatives. As the Strategic Plan workplan was refreshed for 2022-24 in isolation to the existing Strategic Plan outcome measures, there is a diluted relationship between progress against delivery and outcome measures.
16. Whilst this will be addressed in the next annual refresh of the Strategic Plan itself, further consideration on effectively reporting against Strategic Plan outcomes measures for 2022-24 will be given and presented in the Corporate Performance Update: Quarter Two 2022/23 report.

Workplan

17. At Quarter One 2022/23, performance against the Strategic Plan workplan was as set out below, exceeding the corporate target of 90%.

Status	Q1 2022/23 position	Expected standard	Standard achieved	Trend
COMPLETED	0%	90%	Yes	-
GREEN	100%			
AMBER	0%	N/A	N/A	N/A
RED	0%	N/A	N/A	N/A

Strategic Risk Register

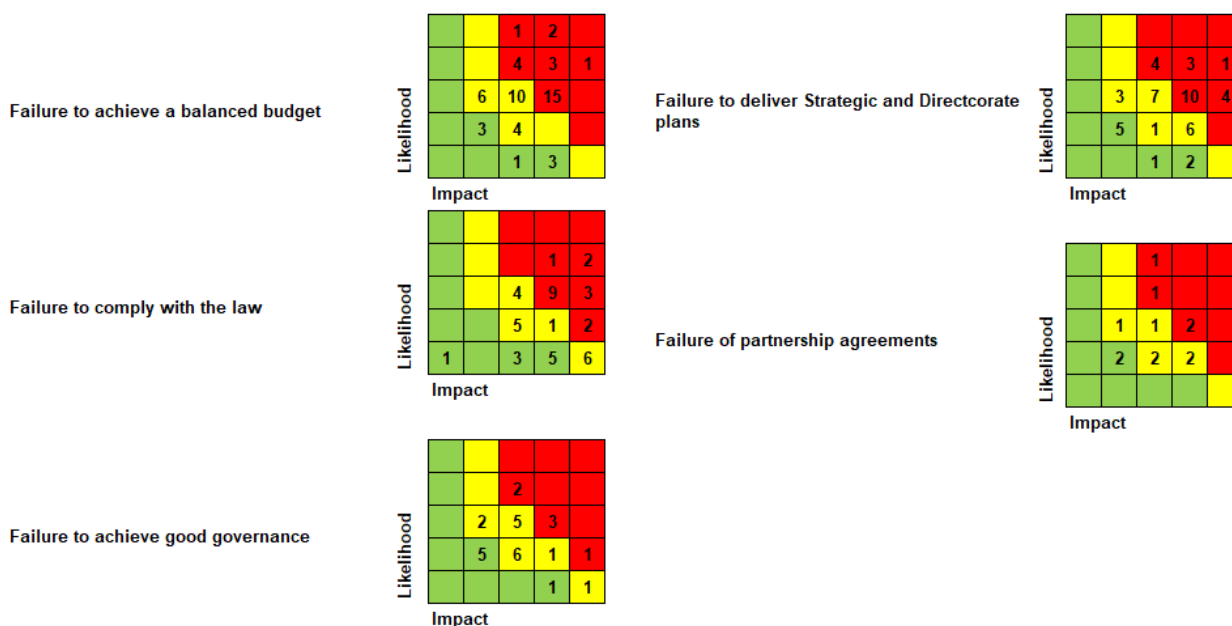
18. The Council's strategic risks are:

- Failure to achieve a balanced budget
- Failure to comply with the law
- Failure to achieve good governance
- Failure to deliver the Strategic Plan and Directorate Plans
- Failure of partnership agreements.

19. All individual organisational risks are aligned to one of the above categories, with work ongoing to refine their content, which should see a reduction in the volume of risks reported in the Quarter Two report. The heat maps below demonstrate the number of risks that contribute to those overall strategic risks.

20. Future reports will set out trend information and reasons for changes to those heat map positions, providing Members with an overview of risk movement within the organisation and the narrative / context for such movement.

21. The risk category position at Quarter One 2022/23 is as follows:



22. During Quarter One, as a result of work undertaken to refine the number of individual risks that comprise the five strategic risk categories, the following significant change has been made to one existing risk:

- ‘Failure to deliver good governance’ strategic risk, had progressed from risk to issue. A new risk has therefore been created to capture the risk of failure to deliver the required improvements to address areas of non-compliance with the Local Code of Corporate Governance.

Progress in delivering Directorate Priorities 2022/23

23. Directorates are accountable for a number of Directorate-specific actions each year to ensure ongoing compliance with legal duties and best practice and that business change is well managed. Directorate Priorities for 2022/23 are set out at Appendix 3.

24. Since approval of the Directorate Priorities for 2022/23 at Executive on 5 April 2022, some minor amendments have been made to remove duplication of effort with the Strategic Plan workplan initiatives, as follows:

Ref.	Directority Priority	Action	Reason
ALL	Deliver all budgeted savings initiatives and maintain spend within the limits provided for in the Medium-Term Financial Plan.	Remove	BAU activity
REG 08	Support Thirteen Group to deliver development at Gresham.	Remove	Not an MBC owned / led project
CUL 05	Increase attendance at existing Council events like Orange Pip.	Remove	Duplicate of SP workplan activity, CUL 01
EC 02 / EC 12	Increase the levels of Environment Enforcement <i>and</i> Increase levels of environment enforcement, where appropriate.	Remove	Duplicate of SP workplan activity, ASB 04
EC 05	Develop a five-year highways asset investment plan.	Remove	Duplicate of SP workplan activity, PEN 03
EC 07	Explore the potential to designate sites across the town as local wildlife / nature reserves, increasing biodiversity in Middlesbrough.	Remove	Duplicate of SP workplan activity, CCH 02
EC 08	Secure additional funding to improve the condition of the Council’s operational estate and highways infrastructure.	Remove	Change title to ‘Secure additional Capital funding to improve the condition of the Council’s operational & commercial Built Asset Portfolio’.
EC 11	Further implement the locality working model to additional wards.	Remove	Duplicate of SP workplan activity, VUL 02
EC 13	Plant another 10,000 trees across Middlesbrough.	Remove	Duplicate of SP workplan activity, CCH 07
FI 11	Development and implementation of a series of projects to maximise opportunity to improve Council Tax collection.	Remove	Duplicate of Directorate Priority, FI 14
CC 02	Deliver the Quality Assurance and Performance Strategy.	Remove	BAU activity
CC 03	Strengthen the way the Children and Young People partnership work together and challenge the quality of practice through the delivery of the Safeguarding Partnership Plan.	Remove	REMOVE as element of wider strategic partnership working
CC 06	Improve the quality of practice to deliver the Middlesbrough Children’s Services Improvement Plan.	Remove	Duplicate of SP workplan activity, CYP 05

25. At Quarter One 2022/23, 100% (98) of Directorate Priorities are on track; above the expected standard of 90%.

Status	Q1 2022/23 position	Expected standard	Standard achieved	Trend
COMPLETED	0%	90%	Yes	-
GREEN	100%			
AMBER	0%	N/A	N/A	N/A
RED	0%	N/A	N/A	N/A

Progress in delivering Programmes and Projects

26. The Council maintains a portfolio of programmes and projects in support of achievement of the Council’s strategic and directorate priorities. At Quarter One 2022/23, 97% (30) of the 31 programmes / projects were on-track to deliver against project time, cost, scope and benefits; above the expected combined standard of 90%.

Status	Q1 2022/23 position	Expected standard	Standard achieved	Trend
COMPLETED	0%	90%	Yes	-
GREEN	77%			
AMBER	20%	N/A	N/A	N/A
RED	3%	N/A	N/A	N/A

Progress in other corporate performance matters

27. In addition to the above performance and risk issues, LMT reviews a range of other performance measures on a monthly basis, including compliance with agreed actions from internal audits, responsiveness to statutory information requests, information security incidents and complaints.

28. At Quarter One 2022/23, the key points of note in matters of compliance, were:

- complaints dealt with within timescales continues to improve to 83%.
- Freedom of Information Requests (FOI) and Environment Information Requests (EIR) responded to within statutory timescales improved, increasing from 80% from 76.8% at the end of 2021/22.
- overdue Subject Access Requests reduced further.

What decision(s) are being recommended?

29. That the Executive:

- approves the proposed amendments to Executive actions outlined at Appendix 1.
- notes achievement progress of the Strategic Plan 2022-24 at Quarter One 2022/23, detailed in Appendix 2.
- notes the Council's updated position in relation to Strategic Risk, at Quarter One 2022/23.
- notes progress of the 2022/23 Directorate Priorities at Quarter One 2022/23, detailed in Appendix 3.

Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

30. To enable the effective management of performance and risk in line with the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance.

Other potential decision(s) and why these have not been recommended

31. Not applicable.

Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Legal

32. The proposed recommendations are consistent with and will promote the achievement of the Council's legal duty to achieve Best Value.

Strategic priorities and risks

33. The proposed recommendations are key to and consistent with supporting deliver of the Council's strategic priorities and risks, as set out in the Strategic Plan.

Human Rights, Equality and Data Protection

34. As reported to Council in February 2021, no negative differential impact on diverse groups and communities is anticipated from the direction of travel set out in the Strategic Plan 2021-24.

Financial

35. Any financial implications relating to issues set out in this report, are summarised in the Revenue and Capital Budget – Quarter One Outturn Position 2022/23 report, also considered by the Executive at its meeting of 6 September 2022.

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Executive action revisions to be implemented on modern.gov	Democratic and Registration Service Manager	16/09/2022
Revised approach in reporting against Strategic Plan outcomes measures for 2022-24 to be developed by Quarter Two reporting	Strategy Delivery Manager	28/10/2022

Appendices

1	Proposed amendments to Executive actions at Quarter One 2022/23
2	Strategic Plan Workplan: progress at Quarter One 2022/23
3	Directorate Priorities 2022/23: progress at Quarter One 2022/23

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Council	Strategic Plan 2021-24	24/02/21
Executive	Strategic Plan 2021-24: approach to delivery	11/05/21
Executive	Strategic Plan 2020-23 – Progress at Year End 2020/21	15/06/21
Executive	Corporate Performance Update: Quarter One 2021/22	07/09/21
Executive	Corporate Performance Update: Quarter Two 2021/22	07/12/21
Executive	Corporate Performance Update: Quarter Three 2021/22	14/02/22
Executive	Refreshing the Strategic Plan workplan for the 2022-24 period	05/04/22
Executive	Corporate Performance Results: Year End 2021/22	14/06/22

Contact: Gemma Cooper, Strategy Delivery Manager
Email: gemma_cooper@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Proposed amendments to Executive actions at Quarter One 2022/23

Executive of	Report	Action	Owner	Agreed Due Date	Proposed Revised Due Date
09/11/21	Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel's Final Report: Behaviour, Discipline and Bullying in Schools (Service Response)	Survey to be issued to staff and students across all schools, sharing feedback with school leaders to influence improvements to behaviour management practices.	CS	30/04/22	30/09/22
		Guidance to be developed and circulated to schools on the importance of language and its influence on changing perceptions and attitudes.	CS	30/04/22	30/09/22
		MBC to share good practice with schools by facilitating peer reviews and providing case study illustrations of good behaviour management practices.	CS	30/04/22	30/09/22
13/04/21	Community Asset Transfers	That a future report be presented to Executive, outlining outcome of financial appraisal and recommendations for community asset transfers.	ECS	30/04/22	31/07/2022

Appendix 2: Strategic Plan Workplan: Progress at Quarter One 2022/23

We will show Middlesbrough's children that they matter and work to make our town safe and welcoming and to improve outcomes for all children and young people.	Q1 2022/23 position
Expand the current model for youth provision in areas that suffer high levels of deprivation	
Make steps towards every child playing a musical instrument by extending to one other school or year group	
Evidence that Middlesbrough Council listens to children's voices	
Create and deliver a strategy to increase digital inclusion for children, young people and adults across Middlesbrough	
Consolidate and build on recent Children's Services progress to improve Ofsted rating	
Explore potential for the establishment of an Eton Sixth Form in Middlesbrough	

We will work to address the causes of vulnerability and inequalities in Middlesbrough and safeguard and support the vulnerable.	Q1 2022/23 position
Deliver and extend the 50 Futures programme	
Further develop the Dementia Friendly Middlesbrough programme	
Achieve 'Age Friendly Communities' status	
Implement and extend locality working	

We will tackle crime and anti-social behaviour head on, working with our partners to ensure local people feel safer.	Q1 2022/23 position
Support the police and hold them to account for each neighbourhood	
Establish and support Neighbourhood Watch schemes across the whole town	
Increase CCTV across the whole town	
More environmental action and punishment for fly tipping	
Encourage more residents to report crime and ASB	
Reward and champion individuals for being good neighbours	

We will tackle crime and anti-social behaviour head on, working with our partners to ensure local people feel safer.	Q1 2022/23 position
Increased enforcement against problem properties / streets / gardens in disrepair	

We will ensure our town acts to tackle climate change, promoting sustainable lifestyles.	Q1 2022/23 position
Develop an Urban Farm	
Develop local wildlife / nature reserve in North Ormesby and one other site	
Demonstrate increased recycling rates	
Establish six community growing areas	
Double the size of our urban meadows / wildflower planting sites	
15 new EV charging points across town	
Big community tree planting days	
Middlesbrough hosts inaugural climate conference	

We will ensure the recovery of local communities, businesses and the Council's operations from COVID-19, taking opportunities to build back better.	Q1 2022/23 position
Delivery of the Council's COVID19 Recovery Plan to enable individuals, families, communities and business across Middlesbrough achieve a proper level of functioning, post-Pandemic	
Ensure effective Council response to immediate issues of COVID19 impacting upon individuals, families, communities and business	

We will work closely with local communities to protect our green spaces and make sure that our roads, streets, and open spaces are well-designed, clean and safe.	Q1 2022/23 position
Improve identified play parks and spaces in line with our Towns Fund Recommendation	
Establish the requirement for potential CPO of derelict buildings and problem sites	
Improve our Highways	
12 new back alleys are reclaimed, improved and showcased	

We will work closely with local communities to protect our green spaces and make sure that our roads, streets and open spaces are well-designed, clean and safe.	Q1 2022/23 position
Neighbourhood and town wide front garden competitions	
Vastly improve Thorntree and Pallister Parks in line with Towns Fund Recommendation	
Creation of Tree Maintenance Squad and ongoing maintenance work programme	
Creation of a subsidised Pest Control service	

We will transform our town centre, improving accessibility, revitalising unused assets, developing iconic new spaces and building more town centre homes.	Q1 2022/23 position
Complete town-wide lighting scheme	
Consider potential for BOHO digital expansion	
St Hilda's housing starts around Old Town Hall	
Protect and celebrate heritage through marketing and comms strategies and complete planned works on Captain Cook pub and Old Town Hall	
Open three entertainment facilities within Captain Cook Square (cinema, Lane 7, eSports)	
Commence construction on the south side of the dock	
Action plan agreed and commenced for House of Fraser building	
Action plan agreed and commenced for Centre North East	
Action plan agreed and commenced for The Crown Pub building	
Action plan agreed and commenced for Gurney House	

We will invest in our existing cultural assets, create new spaces and events, and improve access to culture.	Q1 2022/23 position
Aim for all children to get an experience of live theatre	
Increase attendance at existing Council events like Orange Pip	
Increase visitor numbers to museums and attractions	

We will invest in our existing cultural assets, create new spaces and events, and improve access to culture.	Q1 2022/23 position
Increase tickets sales at town hall performances	

We will ensure that we place communities at the heart of what we do, continue to deliver value for money and enhance the reputation of Middlesbrough.	Q1 2022/23 position
Encourage public to help drive decision making	
Introduce a marketing campaign and associated support to significantly grow Middlesbrough Lottery	
Work with the voluntary sector to create and promote volunteering opportunities and an increase in volunteers	
Introduce Neighbourhood Action Weeks, driven by volunteers	
Market a small local grant programme	
Market a strong buy-local campaign	
Commence work on the new Southlands Centre	
Commence work on Nunthorpe community centre	
Promote Middlesbrough on the national stage	
Increase sponsorship income from businesses for various council activities	
Improve user experience of the council website, increasing online transactions	

Appendix 3: Directorate Priorities 2022/23; Progress at Quarter One 2022/23

Environment and Community Services

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Review and deliver the Community Safety Strategy to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour across Middlesbrough	
Complete works on Column 22b.	
Complete inspections of bridges and structures and implement resulting works where appropriate.	
Determine the future operational status of the Transporter Bridge and secure appropriate investment.	
Secure additional Capital funding to improve the condition of the Council's operational and commercial built asset portfolio	
Review the Asset Management Framework for Middlesbrough.	
Seek funding to improve the A66 through Middlesbrough.	
Implement Year Two actions of the Council's Green Strategy.	
Embed corporate values within the Directorate and make staff feel more valued.	
Improve staff communication within the Directorate so that staff feel more engaged and understand organisational priorities.	

Regeneration and Culture

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Commence programme of investment in Middlesbrough Rail Station and the areas around it.	
Complete relocation of Teesside Archives.	
Development of central Middlehaven for commercial space (Boho X), housing units and restoration of the Old Town Hall and Captain Cook Pub.	

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Commence programme of site infrastructure at Middlehaven through the Brownfield Housing Fund.	
Complete relocation of Council headquarters to Fountain Court.	
Prepare a new balanced Local Plan for consultation, based on greater community engagement.	
Market the premium housing sites at Nunthorpe Grange and Newham Hall.	
Deliver 450 new homes across Middlesbrough.	
Deliver Middlesbrough's Future High Streets Fund programme.	
Deliver Middlesbrough's Town Fund programme.	
Deliver transport schemes to improve efficiency and capacity of the network.	
Embed corporate values within the Directorate and make staff feel more valued.	
Improve staff communication within the Directorate so that staff feel more engaged and understand organisational priorities.	

Finance

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Analyse impacts of Local Government finance reforms, including the Fair Funding Review and the provision of information to support the Council's position and representations to Government.	
Implementation of a centralised corporate welfare solution, to support the financial wellbeing of Middlesbrough residents.	
Review procurement policy and practice in preparation for the outcome of the Procurement Green Paper, including the opportunity for transformation and innovation.	
Review Valuation and Estates to ensure that both the development function and commercial management of assets are resourced and have clear strategic plans.	
Renegotiate the Section 75 arrangement with health partners to ensure services delivered are funded and fully accountable.	
Achieve an unqualified set of accounts for the 2021/22 financial year.	
Implement the 'payment to provider' solution, futureproofing with approach to procurement cards, ensuring the Council supports the local economy while delivering sound financial governance.	
Set a balanced budget for the Council and maintain an accurate and timely Medium-Term Financial Plan.	

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Implement the new accounting regulations in relation to leasing.	
Implement the insurance service review and tender insurance contract arrangements to commence 1 April 2023.	
Monitor the financial position of the Council, including close working with Directorates ensuring correct allocation / maximising use of grants received (e.g. COVID-19), and the monitoring of the Investment Strategy and the effects on the Council's MTFP.	
Improve working and integration between services provided by Financial Planning & Support and Financial Governance & Revenues to maximise available resources and improve the overall service provided.	
Deliver a ward-based cash collection strategy, supporting vulnerable groups with payment solutions to improve Council Tax collection.	
Prepare and complete the Pension Fund triennial valuation as at 31 March 2023.	
Deliver ongoing training and development to the Pension Fund Committee and Board.	
Deliver sound business management practice through the delivery of the asset disposal policy framework, ensuring best value is achieved and the benefit of disposals are shared with local communities.	
Re-procure pensions administration contract.	
Embed corporate values within the Directorate and make staff feel more valued.	
Improve staff communication within the Directorate so that staff feel more engaged and understand organisational priorities.	

Adult Social Care and Health Integration

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Prepare for the implementation of the Liberty Protection Safeguards.	
Develop a Clean Air Strategy for Middlesbrough.	
Review the Gambling Act Policy.	
Review the Licensing Act Statement of Licensing Policies.	
Implement the Newport 2 Selective Landlord Licensing scheme.	
Deliver next phase of integrated model of support for complex needs in Middlesbrough.	
Prepare for the implementation of the <i>People at the Heart of Care</i> White Paper.	

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Prepare for the implementation of the two-day reablement standard in April 2023.	
Complete the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act and evaluate provision.	
Embed corporate values within the Directorate and make staff feel more valued.	
Improve staff communication within the Directorate so that staff feel more engaged and understand organisational priorities.	

Public Health

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Implementation of a partnership approach to ensure the best start in life for Middlesbrough children, reducing early health inequalities and focusing on the first 1001 days of life.	
Publish a revised Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment for South Tees.	
Publish the Director of Public Health's Annual Report.	
Develop the Public Health workforce plan.	
Recruit to shared Public Health Consultant roles with NHS and Teesside University.	
Develop robust plans to deliver the Holiday Activity Fund, building on the learning from 2021.	
Pilot the use of the health inequalities assessment tool on policies and business cases in at least five key areas across Council.	
Develop the 'Work Well' offer in collaboration with education partners to include the development of a bespoke employer-led programme for Public Health, with routes into long-term health and social care opportunities.	
Complete the action plan for the Health and Happiness strand of the Green Strategy.	
Complete in-depth insight work to understand how the Council can work with local communities to understand better local experiences of poverty and build better relationships.	
Complete the health protection assurance report.	
Develop and deliver an improved offer of support for addiction recovery through employment, housing and social / community re-integration.	
Embed corporate values within the Directorate and make staff feel more valued.	
Improve staff communication within the Directorate so that staff feel more engaged and understand organisational priorities.	

Children's Services

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Deliver the Participation Strategy to support our service users to develop the services they receive in partnership with the Children and Young People's partnership.	
Develop and deliver a workforce strategy to support a stable, skilled and focussed leadership at all levels and stable, permanent, skilled frontline workforce.	
Deliver the multi-agency Early Help and Prevention Strategy to commit to supporting families at the earliest stage possible and increase the offer of youth provision.	
Deliver the placement sufficiency strategy to increase our internal placement capacity (internal residential homes and in-house foster carers).	
Target young people who are NEET and provide support to progress into education, employment and training opportunities.	
Deliver the Inclusion and Specialist Support Strategic Plan to remove barriers to learning and wellbeing for children and young people.	
Deliver the Pupil Place Strategy, to ensure sufficient appropriate, high-quality school place are available for children and young people now in the future.	
Work with partners across Education, Health and Social Care to deliver the priorities within the local area SEND Strategy 2021-24.	
Deliver Middlesbrough Community Learning Strategy to increase learning opportunities across Middlesbrough in line with local, regional and national priorities.	
Deliver the Learning and Education Strategy to help school improvement and support educational outcomes in Middlesbrough.	
Work with school and partners to help improve attainment and attendance levels and reduce exclusions for all children across Middlesbrough.	
Deliver a refreshed Youth Justice Plan aligned to the Youth Justice Board's 'Child First' principle	
Embed corporate values within the Directorate and make staff feel more valued.	
Improve staff communication within the Directorate so that staff feel more engaged and understand organisational priorities.	

Legal and Governance Services

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Commence implementation of revised business intelligence dashboard plan following agreement by LMT.	
Commence implementation of Robotic Process Automation within the Council.	
Develop an Operations Strategy (incl. Customer, ICT, operational estate, etc.) for the Council, to reflect post-COVID changes / new ways of working.	
Develop and implement a strategic planning cycle to inform the Council's approach to budget planning and consultation.	
Carry out Local Government Pension Scheme re-enrolment, in-line with legal obligations and duties.	
Ensure limitation dates are met in-line with the Prosecutors Code when dealing with instances of Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour.	
Further embed the Legal Business Partner approach to ensure Regeneration project deadlines and legal needs of the Council are aligned.	
Ensure effective implementation and transition to the new Liberty Protection Safeguards, through Legal advice and support to Adults Services.	
Continued Legal Services support to Children's Services Improvement Journey.	
Review implementation of revised approach to appraisal framework to ensure employee objectives are aligned to the Council's values and Strategic Priorities.	
Complete the Community Governance Review to establish future parish and community councils for Middlesbrough.	
Oversee delivery of actions within the 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement.	
Oversee delivery of actions with the 2021 Annual Equality and Inclusion Report.	
Embed corporate values within the Directorate and make staff feel more valued.	
Improve staff communication within the Directorate so that staff feel more engaged and understand organisational priorities.	

Appendix 1: Proposed amendments to Executive actions at Quarter One 2022/23

Executive of	Report	Action	Owner	Agreed Due Date	Proposed Revised Due Date
09/11/21	Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel's Final Report: Behaviour, Discipline and Bullying in Schools (Service Response)	Survey to be issued to staff and students across all schools, sharing feedback with school leaders to influence improvements to behaviour management practices.	CS	30/04/22	30/09/22
		Guidance to be developed and circulated to schools on the importance of language and its influence on changing perceptions and attitudes.	CS	30/04/22	30/09/22
		MBC to share good practice with schools by facilitating peer reviews and providing case study illustrations of good behaviour management practices.	CS	30/04/22	30/09/22
13/04/21	Community Asset Transfers	That a future report be presented to Executive, outlining outcome of financial appraisal and recommendations for community asset transfers.	ECS	30/04/22	31/07/2022

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Appendix 2: Strategic Plan Workplan: Progress at Quarter One 2022/23

We will show Middlesbrough's children that they matter and work to make our town safe and welcoming and to improve outcomes for all children and young people.	Q1 2022/23 position
Expand the current model for youth provision in areas that suffer high levels of deprivation	
Make steps towards every child playing a musical instrument by extending to one other school or year group	
Evidence that Middlesbrough Council listens to children's voices	
Create and deliver a strategy to increase digital inclusion for children, young people and adults across Middlesbrough	
Consolidate and build on recent Children's Services progress to improve Ofsted rating	
Explore potential for the establishment of an Eton Sixth Form in Middlesbrough	
We will work to address the causes of vulnerability and inequalities in Middlesbrough and safeguard and support the vulnerable.	Q1 2022/23 position
Deliver and extend the 50 Futures programme	
Further develop the Dementia Friendly Middlesbrough programme	
Achieve 'Age Friendly Communities' status	
Implement and extend locality working	
We will tackle crime and anti-social behaviour head on, working with our partners to ensure local people feel safer.	Q1 2022/23 position
Support the police and hold them to account for each neighbourhood	
Establish and support Neighbourhood Watch schemes across the whole town	
Increase CCTV across the whole town	
More environmental action and punishment for fly tipping	
Encourage more residents to report crime and ASB	
Reward and champion individuals for being good neighbours	

We will tackle crime and anti-social behaviour head on, working with our partners to ensure local people feel safer.	Q1 2022/23 position
Increased enforcement against problem properties / streets / gardens in disrepair	

We will ensure our town acts to tackle climate change, promoting sustainable lifestyles.	Q1 2022/23 position
Develop an Urban Farm	
Develop local wildlife / nature reserve in North Ormesby and one other site	
Demonstrate increased recycling rates	
Establish six community growing areas	
Double the size of our urban meadows / wildflower planting sites	
15 new EV charging points across town	
Big community tree planting days	
Middlesbrough hosts inaugural climate conference	

We will ensure the recovery of local communities, businesses and the Council's operations from COVID-19, taking opportunities to build back better.	Q1 2022/23 position
Delivery of the Council's COVID19 Recovery Plan to enable individuals, families, communities and business across Middlesbrough achieve a proper level of functioning, post-Pandemic	
Ensure effective Council response to immediate issues of COVID19 impacting upon individuals, families, communities and business	

We will work closely with local communities to protect our green spaces and make sure that our roads, streets, and open spaces are well-designed, clean and safe.	Q1 2022/23 position
Improve identified play parks and spaces in line with our Towns Fund Recommendation	
Establish the requirement for potential CPO of derelict buildings and problem sites	
Improve our Highways	
12 new back alleys are reclaimed, improved and showcased	

We will work closely with local communities to protect our green spaces and make sure that our roads, streets and open spaces are well-designed, clean and safe.	Q1 2022/23 position
Neighbourhood and town wide front garden competitions	
Vastly improve Thorntree and Pallister Parks in line with Towns Fund Recommendation	
Creation of Tree Maintenance Squad and ongoing maintenance work programme	
Creation of a subsidised Pest Control service	

We will transform our town centre, improving accessibility, revitalising unused assets, developing iconic new spaces and building more town centre homes.	Q1 2022/23 position
Complete town-wide lighting scheme	
Consider potential for BOHO digital expansion	
St Hilda's housing starts around Old Town Hall	
Protect and celebrate heritage through marketing and comms strategies and complete planned works on Captain Cook pub and Old Town Hall	
Open three entertainment facilities within Captain Cook Square (cinema, Lane 7, eSports)	
Commence construction on the south side of the dock	
Action plan agreed and commenced for House of Fraser building	
Action plan agreed and commenced for Centre North East	
Action plan agreed and commenced for The Crown Pub building	
Action plan agreed and commenced for Gurney House	

We will invest in our existing cultural assets, create new spaces and events, and improve access to culture.	Q1 2022/23 position
Aim for all children to get an experience of live theatre	
Increase attendance at existing Council events like Orange Pip	
Increase visitor numbers to museums and attractions	

We will invest in our existing cultural assets, create new spaces and events, and improve access to culture.	Q1 2022/23 position
Increase tickets sales at town hall performances	

We will ensure that we place communities at the heart of what we do, continue to deliver value for money and enhance the reputation of Middlesbrough.	Q1 2022/23 position
Encourage public to help drive decision making	
Introduce a marketing campaign and associated support to significantly grow Middlesbrough Lottery	
Work with the voluntary sector to create and promote volunteering opportunities and an increase in volunteers	
Introduce Neighbourhood Action Weeks, driven by volunteers	
Market a small local grant programme	
Market a strong buy-local campaign	
Commence work on the new Southlands Centre	
Commence work on Nunthorpe community centre	
Promote Middlesbrough on the national stage	
Increase sponsorship income from businesses for various council activities	
Improve user experience of the council website, increasing online transactions	

Appendix 3: Directorate Priorities 2022/23; Progress at Quarter One 2022/23

Environment and Community Services

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Review and deliver the Community Safety Strategy to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour across Middlesbrough	
Complete works on Column 22b.	
Complete inspections of bridges and structures and implement resulting works where appropriate.	
Determine the future operational status of the Transporter Bridge and secure appropriate investment.	
Secure additional Capital funding to improve the condition of the Council's operational and commercial built asset portfolio	
Review the Asset Management Framework for Middlesbrough.	
Seek funding to improve the A66 through Middlesbrough.	
Implement Year Two actions of the Council's Green Strategy.	
Embed corporate values within the Directorate and make staff feel more valued.	
Improve staff communication within the Directorate so that staff feel more engaged and understand organisational priorities.	

Regeneration and Culture

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Commence programme of investment in Middlesbrough Rail Station and the areas around it.	
Complete relocation of Teesside Archives.	
Development of central Middlehaven for commercial space (Boho X), housing units and restoration of the Old Town Hall and Captain Cook Pub.	

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Commence programme of site infrastructure at Middlehaven through the Brownfield Housing Fund.	
Complete relocation of Council headquarters to Fountain Court.	
Prepare a new balanced Local Plan for consultation, based on greater community engagement.	
Market the premium housing sites at Nunthorpe Grange and Newham Hall.	
Deliver 450 new homes across Middlesbrough.	
Deliver Middlesbrough's Future High Streets Fund programme.	
Deliver Middlesbrough's Town Fund programme.	
Deliver transport schemes to improve efficiency and capacity of the network.	
Embed corporate values within the Directorate and make staff feel more valued.	
Improve staff communication within the Directorate so that staff feel more engaged and understand organisational priorities.	

Finance

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Analyse impacts of Local Government finance reforms, including the Fair Funding Review and the provision of information to support the Council's position and representations to Government.	
Implementation of a centralised corporate welfare solution, to support the financial wellbeing of Middlesbrough residents.	
Review procurement policy and practice in preparation for the outcome of the Procurement Green Paper, including the opportunity for transformation and innovation.	
Review Valuation and Estates to ensure that both the development function and commercial management of assets are resourced and have clear strategic plans.	
Renegotiate the Section 75 arrangement with health partners to ensure services delivered are funded and fully accountable.	
Achieve an unqualified set of accounts for the 2021/22 financial year.	
Implement the 'payment to provider' solution, futureproofing with approach to procurement cards, ensuring the Council supports the local economy while delivering sound financial governance.	
Set a balanced budget for the Council and maintain an accurate and timely Medium-Term Financial Plan.	

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Implement the new accounting regulations in relation to leasing.	
Implement the insurance service review and tender insurance contract arrangements to commence 1 April 2023.	
Monitor the financial position of the Council, including close working with Directorates ensuring correct allocation / maximising use of grants received (e.g. COVID-19), and the monitoring of the Investment Strategy and the effects on the Council's MTFP.	
Improve working and integration between services provided by Financial Planning & Support and Financial Governance & Revenues to maximise available resources and improve the overall service provided.	
Deliver a ward-based cash collection strategy, supporting vulnerable groups with payment solutions to improve Council Tax collection.	
Prepare and complete the Pension Fund triennial valuation as at 31 March 2023.	
Deliver ongoing training and development to the Pension Fund Committee and Board.	
Deliver sound business management practice through the delivery of the asset disposal policy framework, ensuring best value is achieved and the benefit of disposals are shared with local communities.	
Re-procure pensions administration contract.	
Embed corporate values within the Directorate and make staff feel more valued.	
Improve staff communication within the Directorate so that staff feel more engaged and understand organisational priorities.	

Adult Social Care and Health Integration

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Prepare for the implementation of the Liberty Protection Safeguards.	
Develop a Clean Air Strategy for Middlesbrough.	
Review the Gambling Act Policy.	
Review the Licensing Act Statement of Licensing Policies.	
Implement the Newport 2 Selective Landlord Licensing scheme.	
Deliver next phase of integrated model of support for complex needs in Middlesbrough.	
Prepare for the implementation of the <i>People at the Heart of Care</i> White Paper.	

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Prepare for the implementation of the two-day reablement standard in April 2023.	
Complete the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act and evaluate provision.	
Embed corporate values within the Directorate and make staff feel more valued.	
Improve staff communication within the Directorate so that staff feel more engaged and understand organisational priorities.	

Public Health

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Implementation of a partnership approach to ensure the best start in life for Middlesbrough children, reducing early health inequalities and focusing on the first 1001 days of life.	
Publish a revised Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment for South Tees.	
Publish the Director of Public Health's Annual Report.	
Develop the Public Health workforce plan.	
Recruit to shared Public Health Consultant roles with NHS and Teesside University.	
Develop robust plans to deliver the Holiday Activity Fund, building on the learning from 2021.	
Pilot the use of the health inequalities assessment tool on policies and business cases in at least five key areas across Council.	
Develop the 'Work Well' offer in collaboration with education partners to include the development of a bespoke employer-led programme for Public Health, with routes into long-term health and social care opportunities.	
Complete the action plan for the Health and Happiness strand of the Green Strategy.	
Complete in-depth insight work to understand how the Council can work with local communities to understand better local experiences of poverty and build better relationships.	
Complete the health protection assurance report.	
Develop and deliver an improved offer of support for addiction recovery through employment, housing and social / community re-integration.	
Embed corporate values within the Directorate and make staff feel more valued.	
Improve staff communication within the Directorate so that staff feel more engaged and understand organisational priorities.	

Children's Services

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Deliver the Participation Strategy to support our service users to develop the services they receive in partnership with the Children and Young People's partnership.	
Develop and deliver a workforce strategy to support a stable, skilled and focussed leadership at all levels and stable, permanent, skilled frontline workforce.	
Deliver the multi-agency Early Help and Prevention Strategy to commit to supporting families at the earliest stage possible and increase the offer of youth provision.	
Deliver the placement sufficiency strategy to increase our internal placement capacity (internal residential homes and in-house foster carers).	
Target young people who are NEET and provide support to progress into education, employment and training opportunities.	
Deliver the Inclusion and Specialist Support Strategic Plan to remove barriers to learning and wellbeing for children and young people.	
Deliver the Pupil Place Strategy, to ensure sufficient appropriate, high-quality school place are available for children and young people now in the future.	
Work with partners across Education, Health and Social Care to deliver the priorities within the local area SEND Strategy 2021-24.	
Deliver Middlesbrough Community Learning Strategy to increase learning opportunities across Middlesbrough in line with local, regional and national priorities.	
Deliver the Learning and Education Strategy to help school improvement and support educational outcomes in Middlesbrough.	
Work with school and partners to help improve attainment and attendance levels and reduce exclusions for all children across Middlesbrough.	
Deliver a refreshed Youth Justice Plan aligned to the Youth Justice Board's 'Child First' principle	
Embed corporate values within the Directorate and make staff feel more valued.	
Improve staff communication within the Directorate so that staff feel more engaged and understand organisational priorities.	

Legal and Governance Services

Priority	Q1 2022/23 position
Commence implementation of revised business intelligence dashboard plan following agreement by LMT.	
Commence implementation of Robotic Process Automation within the Council.	
Develop an Operations Strategy (incl. Customer, ICT, operational estate, etc.) for the Council, to reflect post-COVID changes / new ways of working.	
Develop and implement a strategic planning cycle to inform the Council's approach to budget planning and consultation.	
Carry out Local Government Pension Scheme re-enrolment, in-line with legal obligations and duties.	
Ensure limitation dates are met in-line with the Prosecutors Code when dealing with instances of Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour.	
Further embed the Legal Business Partner approach to ensure Regeneration project deadlines and legal needs of the Council are aligned.	
Ensure effective implementation and transition to the new Liberty Protection Safeguards, through Legal advice and support to Adults Services.	
Continued Legal Services support to Children's Services Improvement Journey.	
Review implementation of revised approach to appraisal framework to ensure employee objectives are aligned to the Council's values and Strategic Priorities.	
Complete the Community Governance Review to establish future parish and community councils for Middlesbrough.	
Oversee delivery of actions within the 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement.	
Oversee delivery of actions with the 2021 Annual Equality and Inclusion Report.	
Embed corporate values within the Directorate and make staff feel more valued.	
Improve staff communication within the Directorate so that staff feel more engaged and understand organisational priorities.	

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	
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Report of:	Executive Member for Finance and Governance Director of Finance
Submitted to:	Executive
Date:	6 September 2022
Title:	Revenue and Capital Budget – Projected Outturn position as at Quarter One 2022/23
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Strategic priority:	All
Key decision:	Yes
Why:	Decision(s) will incur expenditure or savings above £150,000
Urgent:	No
Why:	N/A

Executive summary	
<p>This report advises the Executive of the Council's financial position as at Quarter One 2022/23.</p> <p>The report provides the necessary information to enable the Executive to discharge its financial management responsibilities, setting out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • projected revenue and capital budget year-end outturns as at Quarter One 2022/23; • position statements in relation to the Council's borrowing and prudential indicators, and its reserves and provisions; and • actions that the Council has taken and plans to address the issues raised. <p>The report requests that the Executive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approves the transfer of £5.665m of additional temporary budget to Children's Care in 2022/23 only to correspond with the current MTFP 3-year plan, funded by £3.702m 	

from centrally held contingency budgets and £1.963m from the Social Care Transformation Reserve.

- Notes that following the approval of the above proposed transfer, there is a projected 2022/23 revenue budget year-end outturn as at Quarter One of a £9.012m overspend.
- Notes the management action being taken to address the shortfall and recover the position to a balanced budget.
- Notes the proposed potential implementation of a Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy for 2022/23 to fund transformation costs, in particular in Children's Services, which will be submitted for approval by Full Council on 7 September 2022.
- Notes that the current projected outturn will have a negative impact on the Council's current Medium Term Financial Plan and that the ongoing financial challenges will continue into 2023/24 and future years. The position is currently being assessed and will be reported to Members in due course as part of future Medium Term Financial Plan updates and as part of the budget strategy for 2023/24 to Executive and Council. It should be noted that there is currently a great deal of uncertainty in forecasting created by the pay award, inflationary pressures and the impact on demand for services.
- Approves the proposed revenue budget virements over £150,000 as detailed in Appendix 1.
- Notes the 2022/23 capital budget predicted year-end outturn of £90.614m as at Quarter One against a revised capital budget of £104.675m, and approves the revised Investment Strategy to 2024/25 at Appendix 2.

Purpose

1. This report advises the Executive of the Council's financial position as at Quarter One 2022/23.

Background and relevant information

2. The Council's Scheme of Delegation gives the Executive collective responsibility for corporate strategic performance and financial management / monitoring, together with associated action. Standing Orders and Financial Procedures require the Executive's approval for major virements between revenue budgets, and in-year changes to the Council's capital Investment Strategy.
3. This report provides the necessary information to enable the Executive to discharge its financial management responsibilities, setting out:
 - projected revenue and capital budget year-end outturns as at Quarter One 2022/23;
 - position statements in relation to the Council's borrowing and prudential indicators, and its reserves and provisions; and
 - actions that the Council has taken and plans to address the issues raised.
4. Standing Orders and Financial Procedures and Regulations require the Executive's approval of the proposed revenue budget virements over £150,000 (Appendix 1)
5. A revised Investment Strategy for the period to 2024/25 is attached at Appendix 2 for the Executive's consideration and approval.

Revenue Budget Projected Year-End Outturn as at Quarter One 2022/23

6. The 2022/23 Revenue budget for the Council is £118,328,934 as set out in the Revenue Budget, Council Tax, Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Capital Strategy 2022/23 Report presented to Council on 23 February 2022.
7. As mentioned in previous reports and in the Revenue Budget, Council Tax, MTFP and Capital Strategy 2022/23 Report presented to Council on 23 February 2022, Children's Social Care remains the biggest area of financial concern and a three-year plan was drawn up in July 2021 for the potential MTFP impact. As part of this plan, Children's Care will receive a further £3m p.a. of permanent additional funding from 2024/25 and this is currently built in the Council's MTFP. Until the additional funding is built into the MTFP, it was proposed to fund the amounts requested in the July 2021 plan for 2022/23 and 2023/24 (totalling approximately £9.2m) from Reserves and Centrally Held Budgets. The amount requested by Children's Care for 2022/23 in the three-year plan drawn up in July 2021 was £5.665m. It is intended that the budget for Children's Care in 2022/23 will be temporarily increased for 2022/23 only by £5.665m, by transferring £3.702m from centrally held contingency budgets which are now not required (£2.334m relating to the Covid-19 Scarring in the Care Sector Contingency budget and £1.368m relating to the Covid-19 Impact on Council Tax & NNDR Contingency), and utilising £1.963m from the Social Care Transformation Reserve created at the end of 2021/22.

8. The Council's projected year-end outturn position for 2022/23 as at Quarter One is an overspend of £9.012m (7.6%). The split per Directorate is shown in the table below.

Directorate	2022/23 Full Year Budget	2022/23 Q1 Projected Outturn at year end	2022/23 Q1 INITIAL PROJECTED OVER / (UNDER) SPEND AT YEAR END	2022/23 Projected transfer to central additional inflation contingency (to be actioned at year end when finalised)	2022/23 Q1 PROJECTED OVER / (UNDER) SPEND AT YEAR END (after projected transfer to central additional inflation contingency at year end)
	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
Regeneration and Culture	3,474	2,945	(529)	0	(529)
Environment and Community Services	19,608	22,115	2,507	(2,112)	395
<i>Public Health</i>	(2,827)	(3,369)	(542)	0	(542)
<i>Adult Social Care</i>	43,281	46,476	3,195	(1,600)	1,595
Total - Adult Social Care and Health Integration	40,454	43,107	2,653	(1,600)	1,053
<i>Education & Partnerships</i>	989	821	(168)	0	(168)
<i>Children's Care</i>	44,113	51,755	7,642	(617)	7,025
Total - Children's Services	45,102	52,576	7,474	(617)	6,857
Legal and Governance Services	9,604	9,641	37	0	37
Finance	200	(956)	(1,156)	(20)	(1,176)
Central Budgets	(113)	(2,087)	(1,974)	4,349	2,375
TOTAL	118,329	127,341	9,012	0	9,012

9. One of the major areas of increased expenditure during the latter part of 2021/22 was the level of inflation that existed in the economy and this has continued in the start of 2022/23 and is expected to continue for the remainder of 2022/23. As shown in the table above a number of Directorates have been substantially affected by the hyper-inflationary increases that existed in areas such as fuel, energy, utilities, food, and also increased costs from providers for services such as Waste Disposal, transport provision for children and adults, and Adults and Children's Care providers due to the inflationary increases they have suffered. Further detail is provided within the Directorate variances section of the report. An additional inflation contingency of approximately £4.6m recurring funding was built into the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) presented to Council in February 2022 and this is held centrally. In light of the uncertainty of the cost of these pressures, it is proposed that this additional inflation will be reported against the individual Directorates during 2022/23 and transfers from the centrally held budget will be made at year-end when the financial effects in 2022/23 are confirmed. There will be a need to closely monitor this and further updates will be provided in future budget monitoring reports and the MTFP will be amended accordingly as appropriate.

10. Another area where there are additional potential pressures is the pay award for 2022/23 for Local Government Services employees effective from 1 April 2022. Currently no agreement has been reached between the National Employers and the NJC Trade Unions. The NJC Trade Unions have put a claim in for a substantial increase with a minimum of £2,000 or the current rate of RPI (whichever is greater) on all pay points, alongside other requests such as for a reduced working week, an additional days leave, and various reviews of working arrangements and allowances. The National Employers

have offered that with effect from 1 April 2022, an increase of £1,925 on all NJC pay points 1 and above, and an increase of 4.04% on some allowances. Currently the Trade Unions have not agreed to the National Employers offer.

11. The MTFP presented to Council in February 2022 assumed a 2% pay award for 2022/23, and this along with 1% provided for within the centrally held Inflation Contingency and a further amount equating to approximately 1% remaining in the centrally held Pay and Prices Contingency budget, means that there is currently approximately £3.5m held in Central budgets for the 2022/23 pay award which equates approximately to a provision for a 4% pay award for 2022/23.
12. At this stage in the absence of any formal agreement, it has been assumed in the Quarter One projection that the National Employers offer will be implemented. The pay award offered is currently estimated to cost approximately £6.1m, which equates to approximately an average 6.5% pay award. The budget pressure caused by the effect of the 2022/23 pay award is currently estimated to be £2.6m, however this has been mitigated by savings of approximately £0.5m on the amount provided for the pay award for 2021/22 and £0.3m on the money set aside for the Employers NI increase implemented from April 2022. The resulting estimated pressure of £1.8m is included within Central Budgets as shown in the table in paragraph 8 and detailed in paragraph 79.
13. Provision was made in the updated MTFP presented to Council in February 2022 for the future potential ongoing effects of Covid-19 on income in a number of the areas. Also in the 2021/22 outturn report to Executive on 14 June 2022, a new earmarked Car Parking Pressures Reserve of £782,000 was set up for the potential ongoing effects of Covid-19 on car parking income in future years. The Government have confirmed that no further Government funding will be provided for 2022/23 for the further continuing effects for Covid-19. The effects of Covid-19 are therefore no longer shown separately in these quarterly budget monitoring reports with any continuing effects included within the Directorate totals, and consideration will be made as to updating the MTFP as appropriate for any such effect which is not currently provided for in future years.
14. The financial position of the Council may be improved by the implementation of a Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy for 2022/23 to fund transformation costs across the Council, principally within Children's Services, similar to that implemented for 2021/22. This will be subject to formal approval by a report to Council on 7 September 2022. In order to satisfy the legislation relating to this, confirmation will be required that the capital receipts are available in 2022/23 and that the transformation expenditure will provide future ongoing savings.
15. A number of revenue budget spending controls and measures are proposed in order to reduce the current projected year-end total overspend, and in particular that which exists in Children's Care, and these are detailed in paragraphs 88 to 91.
16. It is proposed that the final overspend at year-end resulting after the revenue spending controls have been implemented will be covered by Reserves. The current level of Reserves is shown in the Reserves and Provisions Section of this report (paragraphs 121 to 123) and detailed in Appendix 3.
17. The ongoing continuing financial effect of any pressures or underspends to budget will be built into future updates of the Council's MTFP.

Progress against budget savings

18. The Revenue Budget, Council Tax, MTFP and Capital Strategy 2022/23 Report presented to Council on 23 February 2022 included no further additional budget savings for 2022/23.

Directorate variances

19. The detail of the variances are set out below. At year-end, 31 areas had spent +/- £150,000 of the agreed budget. Where appropriate, the on-going effects of variances will be considered as part of future updates of the Council's MTFP.

Regeneration and Culture

£529,000 underspend

20. The annual negotiations with the bus service operators for the concessionary travel scheme have resulted in a saving to budget of £471,000. In addition to this saving, the bus service operators were in receipt of Government grants in 2021/22. Following reconciliation of grants paid and Local Authority contributions made in 2021/22, the Council has received a one-off refund of £240,000, which will be deducted from payments to be made in this financial year. The total savings to budget for 2022/23 in relation to the bus service operator payments therefore stands at £711,000. It is proposed that this saving is transferred to the centrally held Pay and Prices provision, and a budget virement for this is included in Appendix 1.

21. Car parking income continues to be significantly lower than that achieved pre the Covid-19 pandemic. Year-end projections are currently showing a combined net loss of £266,000, broken down as follows:

- On Street Parking £406,000 pressure (includes £3,000 expenditure savings)
- Off Street Parking £118,000 saving (includes £56,000 expenditure overspend)
- Decriminalised Parking £22,000 saving (includes £19,000 expenditure savings)

22. The outturn projection for Off Street Parking includes a grant of £850,000 provided to the Council from Tees Valley Combined Authority in 2022/23 for the provision of 2 to 3 hour free parking across the Tees Valley.

23. At the end of financial year 2021/22 the Council created a Car Parking Pressures Reserve of £782,000, and it is intended that the projected £266,000 overspend within 2022/23 will be met from this Reserve and this will be actioned at year-end when the final year-end position is known.

Environment and Community Services

£2,507,000 overspend

24. There is a projected pressure of £360,000 due to an increase in the number of children eligible for home to school transport. This pressure could increase or decrease once the demand for the 2022/23 academic year has been established. A more accurate projection will be provided at Quarter Two.

25. As mentioned in paragraph 9 the Environment and Community Services Directorate has been substantially affected by hyper-inflationary increases in a number of areas. The current estimated effects of this are summarised in the table below. These are likely to be subject to further change and as mentioned in paragraph 9, it is proposed that the

final pressures at year-end will be funded from the £4.6m additional inflation contingency within Central budgets provided for this as part of the 2022/23 budget setting.

Service Area	Description	£
Property Running Costs	Inflation on Utilities	783,500
Building Maintenance	Inflation of Materials & Contractors Pricing	100,000
Integrated Transport Unit	Inflation on Fuel & Contractors Pricing	90,000
Waste Collection	Inflation on Fuel	100,000
Waste Disposal	Main Contract Disposal (increase of £7.36 per tonne)	292,000
Catering	Inflation on Food & Utilities	200,000
Fleet Services	Inflation on Fuel	153,300
Street Lighting	Inflation on Electricity	393,000
TOTAL DEMAND ON ADDITIONAL INFLATION CONTINGENCY BUDGET		2,111,800

26. In addition, there are a number of budget areas within Environment and Community Services which have variances below £150,000, and these account for the overall £2,507,000 total overspend on the budget.

Public Health

£542,000 underspend

27. There are projected savings on Public Health budgets totalling £542,000 in 2022/23, with £427,000 of the projected savings being due to staffing savings as a result of delayed recruitment to vacant posts and other pay related savings with the Service.

Adult Social Care

£3,195,000 overspend

28. There are projected staff savings across the Service totalling £164,000 mainly due to staff turnover and delayed recruitment to vacancies. Similar to Children's Care (as detailed in paragraph 57), there are emerging difficulties within Adult Social Care relating to the recruitment of permanent social work staff, and the Service are having to consider recruiting agency staff to fill vacant posts. The Service are also currently in the process of introducing a recruitment and retention bonus scheme to attract and retain staff.

29. In the first quarter of 2022/23, there has been net growth of £825,000 in purchased care costs (mainly residential care) against the budget set at the start of 2022/23. Further growth of £542,000 is forecast to the year-end. As in previous years, this is subject to substantial change throughout 2022/23 depending on numbers of clients, and therefore this budget will be closely monitored and updates will be provided in future quarterly budget monitoring reports.

30. As mentioned in paragraph 9 the Adult Social Care Directorate has been substantially affected by hyper-inflationary increases mainly from providers of services. This is currently forecast at £1.6m for 2022/23. This amount was provided for as part of the £4.6m additional inflation contingency within Central budgets provided for this as part of the 2022/23 budget setting. This amount is likely to be subject to further change and as

mentioned earlier it is proposed that the final pressure at year-end will be funded from the centrally held budget.

31. The above pressure is offset by the recovery of an additional £155,000 of direct payments surpluses in excess of the budgeted target.
32. The Bed and Breakfast budget for providing temporary accommodation for the homeless within the town is forecast to be overspent by £224,000 (after maximising homelessness grants).
33. Day care income is forecast to be lower than budget by £196,000 due to the lack of availability in transport, and other local authority / health funded individuals that have either left the Service or reduced their attendance during the Covid-19 pandemic and since restrictions were lifted. There will be a need for the Service to establish if this is an ongoing trend, and if so they will be a need to conduct a review of the Service in order to ensure it remains within the budget provided in the future.
34. In addition, there are a number of budget areas within Adult Social Care which have variances below £150,000, and these account for the overall projected £3,195,000 overspend on the Adult Social Care budget at year-end

Education & Partnerships

£168,000 underspend

35. This is mainly due to a projected unbudgeted income of £440,000 for 2022/23 relating to school contributions to capital schemes, as contributions are to be funded from other sources, thereby creating a revenue saving. This saving is partly offset by projected overspends on the Children's Centres and Nurseries budgets totalling £136,000, due to reduced income from lower take up of services than expected.
36. It is also offset by a projected pressure of £192,000 arising from an efficiencies target relating to Prevention Services. This target currently sits within the Education & Partnerships budget, but it is proposed that this is transferred to Children's Care where the budgets relating to this were transferred to at 2022/23 budget setting. This should provide opportunities to reduce this pressure. A budget virement is proposed for this in Appendix 1.
37. For information, the Council received £168.6 m (before deductions and recoupment) of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2022/23. The funding comprises of a number of blocks - Schools Block, Central School Services Block, High Needs Block, and Early Years Block. A large proportion of the Schools Block is passported directly to academies (known as recoupment).
38. It is projected that there will be a £5.3m total cumulative deficit on the DSG grant at the end of 2022/23, mainly attributed to the High Needs Block. This is an increase from the £3.756m total DSG deficit at the end of 2021/22, which included £5.062m attributed to the High Needs Block. This figure can fluctuate, both ways, and a more accurate forecast will be provided at Quarter Two once the young people from the start of the academic year in September 2022 are known.
39. The Council currently has to account for such DSG deficits separate from its own finances, and cannot use its General Fund to clear the deficit. However, this only lasts until the end of March 2023, and therefore there is uncertainty around this in the future

and a risk that after March 2023 the Council may have to provide for the DSG deficit built up over the years. This risk is accounted for in the determination of the General Fund Reserve included as part of the Revenue Budget, Council Tax, MTFP and Capital Strategy 2022/23 Report presented to Council on 23 February 2022.

40. The DSG conditions of grant require that any local authority with an overall deficit on its DSG account at the end of financial year 2021/22, or who's DSG surplus has substantially reduced, present a plan to the DfE for managing its DSG spend in 2022/23 and future years. There is also a requirement to provide information as and when requested by the DfE about pressures and potential savings on its high needs budget.
41. The Council complete regular DSG management recovery plans to outline forecasts over the next 5 years, and are also working with the DfE and have received a grant from "Delivering Better Value" (DBV) that is supporting work to bring this deficit down in future years using best practice and benchmarking across the country. DBV is a long-term programme and 55 other local authorities as well as Middlesbrough Council are on the DBV programme. It should be noted that Middlesbrough Council are not in the "Safety Valve" programme, which is for those local authorities with the greatest DSG deficits.
42. DfE also expect that the schools forum be regularly updated about the authority's DSG account and plans for handling it, including high needs pressures and potential savings.
43. The increasing pressure in DSG and in particular the High Needs Block is due to the fact that alongside social care, the Service is predicting an increase in more complex placements with a forecast increase in Education, Health and Care plans (EHCPs) in the future. In Middlesbrough, the number of EHCPs have increased from 1,370 in 2021 to a predicted level of 1,698 in 2022, a 24% increase. There has also been a 63% increase in requests for EHCP assessment. This is a national issue affecting many local authorities. The Government have partly recognised this by an increase in funding allocated in the latest finance settlement for 2022/23 for both Schools and High Needs Blocks.

Children's Care

£7,642,000 overspend

44. As detailed in paragraph 7 the budget for Children's Care for 2022/23 has been temporarily increased for 2022/23 only by £5.665m as part of the current 3-year MTFP plan. The variances below report against the revised budget for Children's Care in 2022/23 following the £5.665m temporary budget increase for 2022/23.
45. There is a projected overspend on the total Children's Care budget at year-end of £7,642,000 as at Quarter One. The table below shows the split of the additional £5.665m budget provided between the individual budgets within Children's Care, and summarises the variances against the individual revised budgets, with further detail being provided in the paragraphs below.

Service Area:	2022/23 Original Budget	MTFP Temporary Increase in Budget for 2022/23	2022/23 Revised Budget	2022/23 Q1 Projected Outturn at year end	2022/23 Q1 PROJECTED OVER / (UNDER) SPEND AT YEAR END
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
External Residential Agency Placements	9,008	(276)	8,732	13,616	4,884
Education Contributions to External Residential Agency Placements	(750)	0	(750)	(625)	125
CCG Contributions to External Residential Agency Placements	(1,253)	120	(1,133)	(1,888)	(755)
In-House Fostering	3,322	671	3,993	3,956	(37)
Independent Fostering Agency (IFA)	5,395	262	5,657	6,032	375
Adoption Services	1,282	0	1,282	1,298	16
Family & Friends Allowances	2,368	1,244	3,612	3,502	(110)
Safeguarding and Care Planning	2,909	727	3,636	4,540	904
Review and Development Unit	861	203	1,064	1,249	184
Referrals & Assessments	2,487	116	2,603	2,569	(34)
Children Looked After Teams	1,937	606	2,543	2,655	112
Internal Residential Service	3,793	0	3,793	4,087	293
Children with Disabilities service	1,499	0	1,499	1,859	359
Management and Administration	1,606	160	1,766	2,190	424
Improvement	0	1,832	1,832	2,964	1,132
Prevention Services	1,980	0	1,980	1,782	(198)
Other Resource Services	2,003	0	2,003	1,971	(32)
TOTAL	38,448	5,665	44,113	51,755	7,642

46. A proportion of the overspend is linked to transformation and improvement within Children's Services and as detailed in paragraph 14 it is proposed that a Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy is implemented in 2022/23. It should be noted that as the amount has not yet been confirmed and this has not yet been approved by Full Council, the figures for Children's Care have not yet been amended for the effect of this.
47. The external residential agency placements budget is currently projected to be £4,884,000 overspent at year-end, mainly due to price increases within the market generally and new placements initially being made at a higher cost whilst reduced cost long-term permanent placements are sought. This is based on the 50 external residential placements at the end of Quarter One (at 31st March 2022 there were 51) and currently known movements in or out throughout the remainder of 2022/23.
48. The average cost per placement has increased significantly over the past 24 months due to demand across the country and a national lack of placements. Requests for placements are being made multiple times with no interest being received from providers. This had led to increased costs and is a national challenge / pressure and not necessarily specific to Middlesbrough. Also there have been increased costs for some of the remaining placements due to the complex nature of the remaining young people. The Children's Care MTFP plan has a challenging target for getting the average number of external residential placements throughout 2022/23 to 42, with a year-end position for 2022/23 at 37 places. This will require a lot of work around place planning and movement in order to achieve this.
49. The target in the Council's MTFP is to further reduce the number of paid external residential placements to 35 by April 2024. Whilst the reduction in numbers of children

in external placements is broadly on track with that as per the action plan this will require close monitoring and regular review. The significant inflationary and market pressures on average placement costs also need to be closely monitored. Any significant variations from the targets currently set in the MTFP will require the MTFP to be adjusted.

50. As mentioned previously, further work led by the Directors within Children's Services has been undertaken to review all the young people in Residential Agency Placements and ensure that appropriate levels of funding are received from both the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) for Health contributions and from Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for Education contributions. Due to the fact that the complexity of the Council's young people has increased along with the average placement costs, the Health and Education contributions should therefore also increase appropriately. The outturn for the external residential placements budget includes increased Education contributions to placements, some paid direct to providers, of £625,000 for 2022/23, which is a £125,000 pressure on the £750,000 budget set for 2022/23. There is however a significant backlog of Education Health Care Plans and this figure may well in the future increase percentage wise in regards to contributions against the total Children's Care expenditure.
51. The above pressure on the external residential agency placements budget has however been partly offset by projected additional income received from the CCG of £755,000 above the revised budget for the contribution from Health towards the increased cost of placements due to the complex needs of the young people. Dedicated capacity has been provided to liaise with health commissioners in order to maximise health contributions.
52. The in-house fostering services budget is currently projected to be £37,000 underspent at year-end. There are currently 176 placements and this is creating a budget pressure of £483,000, and in addition there is a £152,000 pressure arising from agency and staffing costs above budget. This is however offset by an increased additional temporary budget increase of £671,000 for 2022/23. An increase in this budget should be positive as a whole as the cost per child is less expensive than other demand budgets, and the Service are working to further increase capacity over the next few years.
53. The Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements budget is currently projected to be £375,000 overspent at year-end. This is after an increased additional temporary budget increase of £262,000 for 2022/23. The number of placements / cases has reduced slightly to be currently at 143 (from 145 at 31/3/22), but this is still significantly above the figure allowed for in the 2022/23 budget. Whilst capacity has been maximised within the internal in-house fostering service, an overspend will still exist on this budget to ensure that higher cost external residential placements are minimised. Without the increase in places in in-house fostering provision, the Independent Fostering Agency budget pressure would have increased significantly more than it has. Reductions in expenditure within this area are part of the MTFP strategy for Children's Services and the target is to get down to 121 places by April 2024, however as with external residential places close monitoring needs to take place with regard to inflationary pressures as well as reducing numbers.
54. There are currently 33 children and young people in the adoption process and it is currently projected that there will be 25 Adoption Orders finalised in 2022/23, which is

very positive, and if they materialise into full adoption in 2022/23 this may help to reduce the expenditure in Children's Care later in 2022/23.

55. The Family and Friends Allowances budget is currently projected to be £110,000 underspent at year-end, after the provision of additional temporary budget for 2022/23 of £1,244,000. This is based on an increased number of 451 placements/cases. It should be noted that demand on this budget is expected to continue to grow over the next few years as the Council continue to improve outcomes for Middlesbrough young people and make improvements to services. The costs associated with payments made under this budget are however significantly lower than those in other budgets, such as those in external residential agency placements or Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements. The service, alongside Legal services, are reviewing the policy in order to attempt to mitigate this pressure. This area is seen as a challenge across the country.
56. There is a projected overspend at year-end of £904,000 on the Safeguarding and Care Planning teams revised budget for 2022/23, after the provision of additional temporary budget for 2022/23 of £727,000 relating to agency costs, which is area where there is significant expenditure on. There are also forecast pressures relating to Section 17 payments and support packages for families to keep the young people out of care, and due to the fact that appropriate placements cannot be found and support packages are having to be put in place, which generally cost more than the placements themselves would cost. There have also been increased Professional and Legal costs (including parenting assessments and substance testing) to support improved pre-court proceeding works to reduce the risk of young people going into care into higher cost placements. The Council have received significantly improved feedback from courts relating to this work and this has helped to support improving relations with courts. The Service is working with Finance to analyse the costs further to evaluate value for money of these, and to determine if some of this cost is required to be included ongoing as part of the longer term strategy to reduce/avoid higher Children Looked After costs.
57. As with previous quarters, staff agency costs to cover sickness and vacant posts and transform the Service are a continuing major element of expenditure within the Safeguarding and Care Planning teams budget. It remains a challenge to recruit and retain social workers and this is a significant regional and national challenge as well. A strategy for this is included within the Ofsted Improvement Plan, and supported by the Council's management team. The recruitment of permanent social work staff is a major challenge to the Council, with the continued reliance on the use of significant levels of agency staff being a significant risk to the long-term finances of the Council. Agency staffing has been put forward as a reduction in spend by Directorate for the MTFP work alongside the recruitment and retention strategy, which includes the Council's own academy where newly qualified staff are now coming through and will replace agency staff over the coming next 12 to 24 months and onwards.
58. There is a projected overspend at year-end on the Review and Development budget of £184,000 after the provision of additional temporary budget for 2022/23 of £203,000 relating to agency costs, which is area where there is significant expenditure on. Agency staff to fill vacant posts due to challenges in recruiting are creating a pressure of £218,000 in 2022/23 but as mentioned above these have largely been offset by the additional budget provided on a temporary basis in 2022/23. There is also a forecast pressure of £169,000 relating to the academy and front line costs, which is part of the

recruitment and retention strategy, to improve training and retain staff and build up our own social workers within, which supports the reduction of agency pressure in line with MTFP projections.

59. The Children Looked After teams budget is projecting an overall £112,000 overspend at year-end, after the provision of additional temporary budget for 2022/23 of £606,000 relating to agency staff costs. Similar to that in the Safeguarding and Care Planning teams budget, there is significant expenditure on agency staffing costs to fill vacancies and cover absences, and to support the Improvement Plan. The agency costs in 2022/23 have largely been covered by the temporary additional budget provided for 2022/23 for this area of £606,000, but in the longer term this remains an area of concern. As stated in paragraph 57, the reliance on agency staff is a significant risk to the Council in the medium to longer term. The other key pressure in this service area is from Section 17 costs.
60. The Internal Residential Service budget is projecting a pressure of £293,000 due to challenges around recruitment, which is requiring the use of agency staff and additional overtime across the Service. There are also costs to support the transition to independence that are required to reduce costs in Adult Social Care services. These pressures have been partly offset by income generated from charging a place to another Local Authority.
61. The Children with Disabilities Service is projecting an overall £359,000 pressure on its budget, mainly due to a number of expensive care packages of support required for young people in the Service.
62. The Management and Administration budget is projecting a £424,000 pressure, even after the provision of additional temporary budget for 2022/23 of £160,000 relating to agency staff costs. There is a £266,000 projected net pressure arising from two very high cost agency payments for vacant Heads of Services posts which is offset partly by the additional budget provided of £160,000. Middlesbrough has now been invited to bid for DfE improvement money to offset the cost of one of these Head of Service posts, as was the case in 2021/22. There was an expectation that we would have been able to bid at the beginning of Quarter One 2022/23, but surprisingly this was not the case. There are also £272,000 of previous years savings not predicted to be fully achieved, and a £46,000 projected pressure within a variety of Strategic Services budgets.
63. The Improvement journey continues in Children's Services, and it is currently projected that there will be £2,964,000 of expenditure relating to this in 2022/23. £1,832,000 of additional temporary budget was provided for this in 2022/23 as per the current MTFP 3-year plan, comprising of £1,154,000 specially provided for Improvement posts and £678,000 from the amount provided for agency costs which is to be shown against this budget. After the provision of the additional funding for 2022/23, there is a projected pressure of £1,132,000 on this budget. A reduction in this budget is required in future years in order to achieve the planned level of ongoing budget of £1,154,000 from 2024/25 for this area as per the current MTFP plan.
64. Prevention Services are reporting a £198,000 forecast saving on their budgets, due mainly to a projected over achievement of grant income for the Payments by Results element of the Supporting Families Grant, along with continuing to achieve efficiencies whilst delivering this service.

65. As mentioned in paragraph 9 the Children's Care Directorate has been affected by hyper-inflationary increases from providers. These are currently forecast to be approx. £617,000 for 2022/23, comprising of £408,000 for External Residential Placements and £209,000 for Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) payments. This amount was provided for as part of the £4.6m additional inflation contingency within Central budgets as part of the 2022/23 budget setting. This amount is likely to be subject to further change, and as mentioned earlier it is proposed that the final pressures at year-end will be funded from the centrally held budget.

66. In addition to the above, there are a number of budget areas within Children's Care which have variances below £150,000, and these account for the overall £7,642,000 current projected overspend on the Children's Care budget at year-end.

Legal and Governance Services

£37,000 overspend

67. There are no budget areas within Legal and Governance Services which have projected variances above £150,000.

Finance

£1,156,000 underspend

68. Teesside Advanced Manufacturing Park (TAMP) is now fully occupied. This has increased the amount of rent achievable on the site and decreased any financial liabilities to the Council such as business rates and service charges on voids. The projected outturn position at year-end is therefore significantly better than the budget, with an overachievement of income projected to be £233,000.

69. A net surplus of £336,000 is projected relating to excess rental income above budget from tenants renting space in Centre Square Buildings 1 & 2.

70. As mentioned in the report to Council in February 2022, additional unbudgeted income of £200,000 per annum from Captain Cook Square is assumed in the MTFP from 2022/23. It is projected that there will be additional income of £122,000 (after capital financing costs) above that budgeted for in 2022/23.

71. The Council purchased the Cleveland Centre Shopping Centre on 7 January 2022, however no income target was assigned to the Cleveland Centre at the 2022/23 budget setting, and therefore there is projected unbudgeted income for the Centre of £1,231,000. This is after capital financing costs for the acquisition of the Centre have been transferred to the Capital Financing budget. Further updates of this will be provided in future budget monitoring reports to Executive, and the MTFP will be updated accordingly.

72. There is however a pressure of £111,000 projected in 2022/23 relating to the House of Fraser building (owned by the Council) following the departure of the previous tenant, due to maintenance and other costs until new tenants are secured for the building.

73. The Commercial Property Income budget is projecting a pressure of £448,000 across the portfolio. This is due to a combination of vacancies, Council departments taking units preventing external rent income being achieved, and a small proportion of units being let to charitable and community organisations without charging. Additionally, the charge to tenants has not increased for a period of time, this is due to the quality of the units not being maintained. An exercise is planned to assess what capital would be

required to update the units and whether the rent could be increased to such a point that there would be a return on the investment.

74. There is currently a pressure of £30,000 on the costs of CIPFA providing independent support to review internal governance processes. These costs will be monitored throughout 2022/23 and reported in future quarterly budget monitoring reports.

75. In addition, there are a number of budget areas within Finance which have variances below £150,000, and these account for the overall £1,156,000 projected total underspend on the Finance budget at year-end.

Central Budgets

£1,974,000 underspend

76. The Capital Financing budget is projected to overspend by £120,000 due to rising interest rate costs.

77. As stated in paragraph 9 an additional inflation contingency of £4,644,000 recurring funding was built into the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) presented to Council in February 2022 and this is held centrally under Central Budgets. As detailed in paragraph 9, it is proposed that the additional inflation will be reported against the individual Directorates during 2022/23 and transfers from the centrally held budget will be made at year-end when the financial effects in 2022/23 are confirmed. £900,000 of the additional inflation contingency provided relates to the Pay Award for 2022/23, which will be utilised in 2022/23 as shown in paragraph 12, and therefore currently the Central Budgets have a budget of £3,744,000 with no expenditure against it as the additional inflationary costs are held within Directorates.

78. It can be seen from the table in paragraph 8 that there are currently total projected costs of £4,349,000 in 2022/23 for additional inflation costs within Service Directorates. Therefore there is a projected pressure of £605,000 relating to additional non-pay inflation pressures across all Directorates against the total amount provided for in 2022/23. Whilst this is currently reported against the Directorates, the final amount will be reported at year-end against Central Budgets as the inflation contingencies are held centrally. This is based on best estimates, due to current hyper-inflationary increases the situation will continue to be monitored closely and updates provided in future reports. The anticipated ongoing inflationary requirement is also being considered as part of the updates of the MTFP.

79. As detailed in paragraph 12, the proposed pay award for 2022/23 is currently forecast to be higher than that provided for and there is a resulting pressure of approximately £1.8m due to this. This projected pressure will be shown against Central Budgets.

80. In addition to the above, there are a number of budget areas within Children's Care which have variances below £150,000, and these account for the overall £1,974,000 current projected underspend on the Central Budgets at year-end.

Council Tax and Business Rates income

81. Income from Council Tax and Business Rates (NNDR) is accounted for within the Collection Fund. Because of the way that this works in relation to the General Fund, the financial impact of any reduction in income does not immediately affect this year's financial position, it is effectively a shortfall to be resolved next year and will need to be

reflected in an updated Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) at the appropriate time.

82. The MTFP presented to Council in February 2022 included the estimated effect of Council Tax and Business Rates income during 2021/22, but it is clear that there are a number of issues, including the current economic climate, which may potentially result in pressures continuing on Council Tax and Business Rates income in future years, and this will be closely monitored and the MTFP will be updated for this as appropriate.
83. Our budgeted Council Tax base includes assumptions on housing growth. If there is reduced growth in housing numbers, this will impact on income levels.
84. The Government provided support for businesses through increased business rates reliefs and grants in 2020/21. These largely remained in place during the first quarter of 2021/22, but reduced throughout the remainder of 2021/22 and the start of 2022/23. Following the reduction in the level of this support, businesses may struggle to pay their business rates, and therefore there is a risk that Business Rates revenue reduces in the future if businesses fail or are unable to pay.
85. In addition, the level of outstanding Council Tax and Business Rates debt is likely to rise and the Council will need to review the potential to collect that debt.
86. The Government has also provided grant funding to the Council through the Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme to support households with increasing energy costs for 2022/23. This should help improve the level of Council Tax income collected in 2022/23, as where applications are not received from Council Tax payers for the Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme, the income can be allocated to individual council taxpayers accounts reducing any amounts of council tax owed.
87. The position relating to Council Tax and Business Rates income for 2022/23 and future years and the effects on the Collection Fund will be closely monitored, and updates will be provided in future budget monitoring reports

Revenue budget spending controls

88. As previously reported to the Executive, a number of controls were implemented from 2019/20 to minimise overspending across the Council in-year and these remained in place for 2020/21 and 2021/22, and it is proposed that they will continue in 2022/23, specifically:
 - a vacancy control process overseen by the Leadership Management Team;
 - checks against proposed expenditure of over £5,000 by the procurement team; and
 - strong controls over staff travel, the ordering of stationery and use of first class post.
89. For 2022/23 the Council is continuing to minimise the use of agency staff where it is appropriate to do so, but it is acknowledged that there will be a need in 2022/23 for the use of agency staff within Children's Care, principally to cover vacant posts due to recruitment issues and also to support the continued transformation within Children's Services, however this will be minimised as far as possible. The Council is using additional recruitment and retention packages to support the reduction of use of agency

staff in future years. Monthly reports on agency costs will be provided to senior managers in order to provide information to enable them to monitor and control costs relating to this.

90. The new Director of Finance is working urgently in conjunction with Leadership Management Team, in line with their delegated authority to manage budgets, to identify areas for recovery to improve the financial position in 2022/23. Directors have been requested to curtail any discretionary expenditure wherever possible. Whilst this falls short of a spending freeze, further measures may be required if the position cannot be stabilised and improved. As an urgent measure a regular Member led meeting to discuss the key areas of spending and address the financial issues facing Children's Social Care will be implemented.
91. Clearly the ongoing financial challenges will continue into 2023/24 and future years, and the position is currently being assessed and will be reported to Members in due course as part of future Medium Term Financial Plan updates and as part of the budget strategy for 2023/24 to Executive and Council. There is currently a great deal of uncertainty in forecasting created by the pay award, inflationary pressures and the impact on demand for services.

Capital Budget Projected Year-End Outturn 2022/23 as at Quarter One

92. As part of the Revenue Budget, Council Tax, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Strategy 2022/23 report to Full Council on 23 February 2022, Council approved a capital budget for 2022/23 of £124,825,000 (the original 2022/23 capital budget). In the Revenue and Capital Budget – Year End Outturn Position 2021/22 report of 14 June 2022, Executive approved a revised capital budget for 2022/23 of £104,675,000. Following a further review and the inclusion of new additional schemes, increases to existing schemes, and reductions to existing schemes (as detailed in paragraphs 95 to 97), it is currently predicted at Quarter One that the Council will spend £90,614,000 at year-end.
93. The revised Investment Strategy to 2024/25 is included at Appendix 2 for approval.
94. No schemes over £150,000 are proposed to be removed from the Investment Strategy
95. It is proposed to add the following scheme above £150,000, to the revised Investment Strategy, set out at Appendix 2 for consideration and approval :
- On 10 May 2022, Executive approved the report titled “Cultural Capital Investment Prospectus”. The report detailed the Council’s successful bid for grant funding to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Cultural Development Fund. The successful bid was a collaboration between the Council and three other cultural organisations within the town. The total value of the grant is £4,250,000, of which £4,108,000 is capital funding. The Council’s element of the grant funding will be utilised within the Central Library, refurbishing all of the library spaces and meeting rooms, creation of a new flexible event space, the provision of a new fully accessible lift, a new toilet / baby change facility and an external stage. The Council has provided match funding using £90,000 of its own resources and £250,000 of the Future High Streets Fund grant.

96. The following additions to schemes in the current Investment Strategy which have been recently approved by Executive are also to be included in the revised Investment Strategy, set out at Appendix 2 for consideration and approval :

- On 12 July 2022, Executive approved the report titled “Centre Square – Future Office Provision”. The report approved £305,000 of Council resources to fit-out the remaining untenanted space at Centre Square 1 to category A standard. This will enhance the Councils opportunity to let the space which when done so will provide a return on this investment.
- £800,000 of Council resources have been added to the Investment Strategy for investment in equipment within the leisure facilities. This investment is as per the agreement with the Council’s external leisure provider (SLM). Whilst the provider manages the facilities, the equipment remains within the Councils ownership.
- As part of the “Developing a New Community Centre at Southlands” report of 14 June 2022, Executive approved £900,000 of additional Council resources towards the project. This funding, coupled with pre-existing funds and Towns Fund grant will deliver the Councils aim for an exciting and transformational new Community and Sport Centre which will help regenerate East Middlesbrough and greatly improve the lives of local people. The total investment stands at £3,100,000 with an additional £600,000 expected to be provided by a grant from the Football Foundation.
- The Executive report of 29 September 2020 titled “Land North of Marton Avenue – Preferred Bidder for Site Disposal” approved, along with the sale of the land, certain capital contributions from the capital receipt. Payment for the land has now been received and as such the contributions can be added to the Investment Strategy as follows:
 - £472,500 for the provision of off-site affordable housing.
 - £142,000 for the provision of a strategic road
 - £22,500 refund to the Environment Agency for culvert diversion works.
- On 10 May 2022 the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities wrote to Councils to provide official confirmation of the 2022/23 Disabled Facilities Grant allocations, to which Middlesbrough Council has been awarded £2,268,123. This has been allocated within the Investment Strategy over financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24, as grant carried forward from previous years will be used to meet in-year demand for the service in the first instance.
- On 10 May 2022, Executive approved the “Improving our Highways” report, providing £15,000,000 of Council resources to be spent on the highways network. The report identified that the condition of Middlesbrough’s road network is in decline with 15% of the total carriageway network categorised as Red / Amber. Executive approved the prioritisation of immediate works for 2022/23 on the premise that during which time a re-evaluation exercise would be undertaken to Red / Amber carriageway defects; developing a longer term strategy for maintenance and improvements, in-line with the MTFP.

97. There were no schemes within the current investment strategy that were reduced by over £150,000.

98. The split by Directorate is shown in the table below, which also shows the “real” projected outturn variance if all of the additional new schemes, increased schemes, reduced schemes, and transfers between directorates are excluded. Explanations for variances of +/- £150,000 across fifteen schemes are set out in the following paragraphs. These variances require movement within the Council’s four-year Investment Strategy, but do not affect the overall investment or cost of borrowing.

Directorate	2022/23	2022/23	2022/23	MEMO	
	Investment Strategy Budget (as per 21/22 outturn)	Investment Strategy Projected Outturn at Q1	Investment Strategy Projected Outturn Variance at Q1	New, increased & reduced Schemes / transfers	Real outturn variance excluding new, increased, & reduced schemes / transfers
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Regeneration and Culture	74,388	60,612	(13,776)	691	(14,467)
Environment and Community Services	12,649	11,704	(945)	1,944	(2,889)
Public Health	896	140	(756)	0	(756)
Education & Partnerships	9,132	9,308	176	(40)	216
Children’s Care	326	366	40	40	0
Adult Social Care and Health Integration	2,713	3,593	880	819	61
Legal and Governance Services	4,158	4,478	320	0	320
Finance	413	413	0	0	0
Total	104,675	90,614	(14,061)	3,454	(17,515)

Regeneration

99. Town Centre Related Projects - £428,000 of funds relating to the Heritage Action Zone scheme require re-profiling into 2023/24. This is due to two factors; building works associated with three of the property grants provided are at tender stage with works now anticipated to complete in 2023/24 and the public realm Zetland Road improvements have been paused until all works at the rail station are complete.

100. Housing Growth – Discussions between the Council and the housing developers are on hold until one of the developers planning application in respect of Nunthorpe Grange is approved by the Planning Committee. The application is expected to be tabled at the September committee. If successful, the Council will restart negotiations with regard to how the associated works are funded. The scheme also requires to be fully designed, costed and tendered. Consequently, the works are now not expected to commence in 2022/23, resulting in £1,758,000 of resources being transferred into 2023/24.

101. Brownfield Housing Fund – Natural England have raised significant concerns with regard to nutrient pollution within the waterways caused by house building. These concerns are currently preventing Planning Authorities from approving new schemes. This is directly impacting the Councils remediation works at Middlehaven. Whilst solutions are being sought with regard to the nutrient pollution issue, the significant delays in respect of the remediation works are expected to result in £4,361,000 of planned grant expenditure no longer being required within this financial year and therefore being re-profiled into 2023/24.

102. Towns Fund – A total of £3,861,000 requires re-directing into 2023/24 predominantly due to the following sub-projects;

- £1,076,000 relating to Urban Living and Place Making – Expenditure in relation to this element of the grant is predicated upon the Council agreeing to the provision of funding to developers regarding housing development. Whilst there are interested parties, there are currently no firm proposals. As such, the funding has been re-profiled into 2023/24.
- £574,000 relating to the Old Town Hall has been deferred until 2023/24. This is due to discussions that the Council is undertaking with Heritage Lottery Fund with regard to submitting a grant application associated which will potentially increase the resources available, resulting in a significantly greater improved scheme.
- £750,000 relating to Nunthorpe Community Hub has been transferred into 2023/24. Following a review by the Section 151 Officer, the development of the centre will be taken forward through direct Council process in consultation with the community, rather than being led by a community group. As a result, there is a delay in the project timeframe to ensure the location of the centre meets the community's needs.
- £1,461,000 relating to East Middlesbrough Community Hub. The plans for the hub are still to be finalised, this has resulted in a proportion of the expected expenditure now being re-profiled into 2023/24.

103. Future High Streets Fund - £1,282,000 of grant funding has been transferred into 2023/24 predominantly due to the following;

- £1,000,000 relating to Urban Living. The Council will enter into a grant agreement with a developer in respect to the creation of urban living units within the town centre. The formulation of the agreement has taken longer than anticipated with the grant no longer being expected to be provided within 2022/23.
- £320,000 relating to Retail Conversions. Whilst significant progress has been made in respect of the transformation of the Captain Cook Precinct into a leisure destination, with two tenants confirmed and a further two at heads of terms, the remaining provision for aiding tenants to decant from the site is deemed to be unrequired within this financial year and has been re-profiled into 2023/24.

104. Middlesbrough Development Company (MDC) – £975,000 of assumed expenditure has been transferred into 2023/24. This is by agreement with Council officers and the Managing Director of MDC following a review of all active acquisitions / projects associated with the Empty Homes and Eyesore Site schemes. Should any further opportunities arise within either scheme during this financial year the necessary funds will be transferred back into 2022/23.

105. Teesside Advanced Manufacturing Park Phase 2 – The Executive report of 10 May 2022 “Tees Advanced Manufacturing Park Next Phase” set out the required funding for the construction of the park, which included an assumption that TVCA would provide a grant to the Council of £1,550,000. TVCA has subsequently stated that they cannot provide the grant but have presented a solution, being that the Council can effectively retain all of the business rates on the site. This solution is effectively cost neutral to the Council, however, as it is a departure from the original Executive approval, a

subsequent report which further outlines the proposal is proposed to be tabled at a future Executive meeting. The change in the funding mechanism has caused a delay of approximately four months to the originally stated milestones, resulting in re-profiling of £1,250,000 into 2023/24.

106. Local Transport Plan – A total of £322,000 of grant funded expenditure associated with a number of small value schemes has been transferred into 2023/24.

Environment & Community Services

107. Cleveland Centre – An action plan and spending profile in respect of the required capital works to the centre has now been determined with major works to the car park, asbestos encapsulation, and fire protection, now being expected to conclude in 2023/24, with £1,344,000 of assumed expenditure transferring accordingly.
108. Municipal Buildings Refurbishment - £1,500,000 has been re-profiled into 2023/24. This is due to the time required to clear out the attics and basements and find alternative storage facilities taking longer than originally anticipated, resulting in the refurbishment works not being able to commence within the originally assumed timeframe.
109. Resolution House – Planned works cannot commence until an agreement has been reached with the other custodian local authorities concerning the future of the site. Discussions with the other local authorities are ongoing but these are taking longer than anticipated. This has caused a delay to the commencement of the scheme with £500,000 of funds now being redirected into 2023/24.
110. Town Hall Roof – Due to the complexity and nature of the works associated with the roof, the tender process has been delayed, resulting in £500,000 of planned expenditure being re-profiled into 2023/24.
111. Property Asset Investment Programme – £957,000 of Council funds earmarked for expenditure in 2023/24 and future years has been brought forward to 2022/23 in order to fund urgently required works in respect of boiler replacements and roof replacements at several Council properties.

Public Health

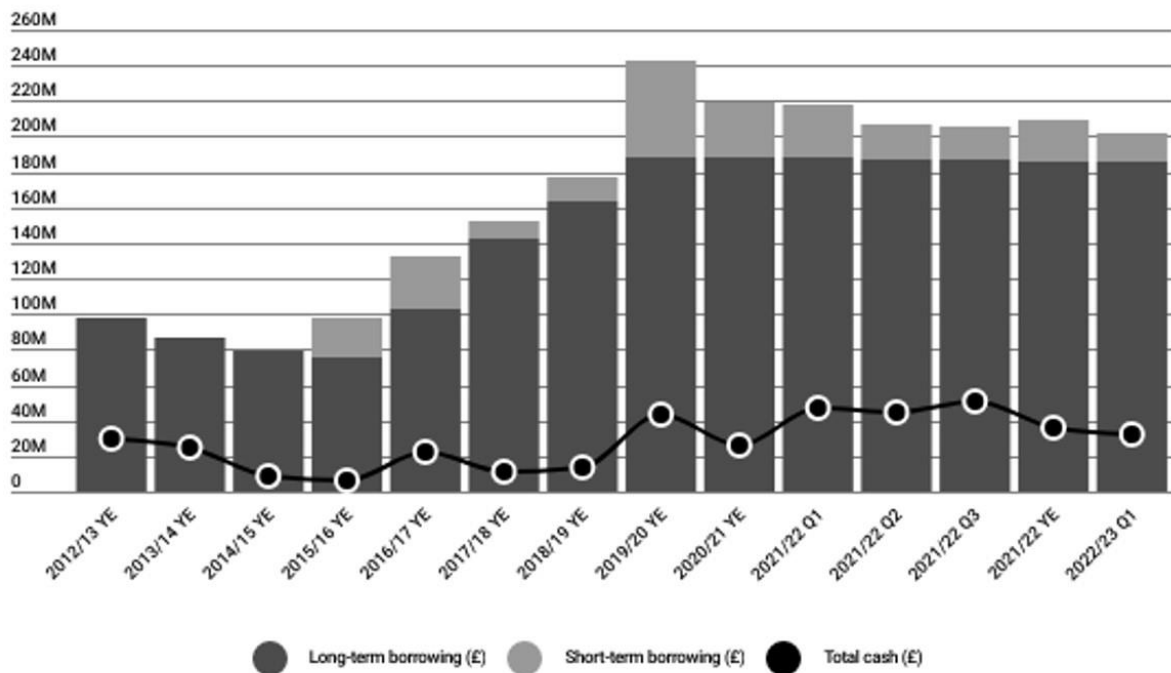
112. Health and Wellbeing Hub – As part of the wider accommodation strategy the Council has deferred the decision to expand the Live Well Centre. Should the expansion go ahead it would not do so within this financial year, resulting in £756,000 being re-profiled into 2023/24.

Legal & Governance Services

113. ICT - Essential Refresh & Licensing - £320,000 of funds have been brought into 2022/23 from 2023/24 and future years in order to fund the implementation of Microsoft 365 and the Councils new electronic storage facility, SharePoint, within the agreed project timeframe.

Borrowing & Prudential Indicators

114. The Council's total borrowing decreased from £208.8m at 31 March 2022 to £202.1m at 30 June 2022. This decrease of £6.7m reflects maturing debt on short-term borrowing of £6.5m, and repayment of principal amounts on existing annuity loans held by the Council at £0.2m. Cash balances remained robust during the first quarter of 2022/23 and were at £32.5m at 30 June 2022. As this level remained well above the Council's trigger level for borrowing of £15m (mainly due to grants being paid in advance of need by central government), no amounts were needed to be drawn down to finance the Investment Strategy.
115. The ratio of short-term to long-term borrowing has decreased during the quarter given the repayment of some of the short-term loan portfolio. The recent rises in both bank rate and longer-term interest rates mean that deferring borrowing decisions where possible and until cash levels reduce, will result in marginal savings to the capital financing budget. The overall strategy for borrowing in the current inflationary climate is being discussed with our external treasury management advisers.



116. The affordability and sustainability of the Investment Strategy and its total level of external borrowing and capital financing costs is self-regulated by the Council through a set of prudential indicators. These thresholds are set as part of the integrated annual budget setting process in late February each year. CIPFA and Government view this approach as best practice in ensuring resources are allocated prudently to capital schemes.
117. The table below gives a comparison of the original budget against the actual position as at Quarter 1 for 2022/23 on each of the prudential indicators adopted by the Council.

<u>Prudential Indicators - 2022/23 Quarter 1</u>		
	<u>Original Budget</u> (£M)	<u>Actual</u> (£M)
Capital Expenditure	124.825	90.614
<u>Financing</u>		
External Sources	74.344	49.815
Own Resources	6.296	3.179
Debt	44.185	37.620
Capital Financing Requirement	295.865	295.375
External Debt	268.350	202.123
Investments	15.630	32.530
Capital Financing	10.466	10.587
Cost as a % of Revenue Budget	8.8%	8.9%

118. The total capital spend & level of financing has reduced by £34.2m since the original budget was set for this financial year. This is explained in more detail in the Investment Strategy section of the report but essentially reflects re-profiling of scheme requirements to later years due to the changing needs on individual schemes, and low contractor availability. The reduction is mainly related to grant funding being deferred into the next financial year, but there is also some reduction in the debt levels required due to similar reasons.

119. The Council's total under borrowed position (external debt compared to the capital-financing requirement – or underlying need to borrow) is £93.3m, or 31.5%, at 30 June 2022. As cash balances reduce during the 2022/23 financial year to relatively normal levels, with the level of reserves planned to be spent, plus the borrowing requirements within the Investment Strategy, around £50m - £60m of this under-borrowing will be needed to maintain the Council's overall liquidity position.

120. The amount of external debt at £202.1m and the total underlying need to borrow of £295.4m are both well below the Council's authorised debt limit of £356m for the year. This is the threshold above which any borrowing would be illegal. The cost of capital financing to the Council is slightly higher than set as part of the budget process due to recent increases in interest rates available for both short and long-term borrowing.

Reserves and Provisions

121. The table below sets out a summary of the balance of reserves and provisions at the start of 2022/23 and the current projection as at year-end, and further detail is provided in Appendix 3.

Reserves and Provisions 2022/23	Opening Balance	Proposed Use in Year	Additional Contributions	Transfers between reserves	Transfers from / (to) General Fund	Projected Balance at Year End
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
General Fund Reserve	11,183	0	858	0	0	12,041
Earmarked Reserve - Social Care Transformation Reserve	7,072	(1,963)	0	0	0	5,109
Earmarked Reserves	25,750	(1,470)	230	0	0	24,510
Earmarked Reserve - Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)	(3,756)	(1,544)	0	0	0	(5,300)
School balances	4,802	0	0	0	0	4,802
Provisions	1,921	0	0	0	0	1,921
TOTAL	46,972	(4,977)	1,088	0	0	43,083

122. As can be seen from the table above, a large proportion of the Reserves are earmarked for special purposes and cannot be used generally or to balance the budget.

123. It should be noted that the projected year-end balances do not currently include how the final revenue outturn at year-end 2022/23 will be funded, as it is hoped that the implementation of the revenue budget controls outlined in paragraphs 88 to 91 will reduce the current projected overspend by the end of 2022/23. The final revenue outturn at year-end 2022/23 will be funded from Reserves, with the remaining £5.109m Social Care Transformation Reserve initially being used. As noted earlier, this will have a negative effect on the current MTFP and the position is currently being assessed and will be reported to Members in due course as part of future Medium Term Financial Plan updates and as part of the budget strategy for 2023/24 to Executive and Council.

124. The use of Reserves will be managed by the Director of Finance, with reports being provided to Executive as part of the quarterly budget monitoring reports.

What decision(s) are being recommended?

The report requests that the Executive:

- Approves the transfer of £5.665m of additional temporary budget to Children's Care in 2022/23 only to correspond with the current MTFP 3-year plan, funded by £3.702m from centrally held contingency budgets and £1.963m from the Social Care Transformation Reserve.

- Notes that following the approval of the above proposed transfer, there is a projected 2022/23 revenue budget year-end outturn as at Quarter One of a £9.012m overspend.
- Notes the management action being taken to address the shortfall and recover the position to a balanced budget.
- Notes the proposed potential implementation of a Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy for 2022/23 to fund transformation costs, in particular in Children's Services, which will be submitted for approval by Full Council on 7 September 2022.
- Notes that the current projected outturn will have a negative impact on the Council's current Medium Term Financial Plan and that the ongoing financial challenges will continue into 2023/24 and future years. The position is currently being assessed and will be reported to Members in due course as part of future Medium Term Financial Plan updates and as part of the budget strategy for 2023/24 to Executive and Council. It should be noted that there is currently a great deal of uncertainty in forecasting created by the pay award, inflationary pressures and the impact on demand for services.
- Approves the proposed revenue budget virements over £150,000 as detailed in Appendix 1.
- Notes the 2022/23 capital budget predicted year-end outturn of £90.614m as at Quarter One against a revised capital budget of £104.675m, and approves the revised Investment Strategy to 2024/25 at Appendix 2.

Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

125. To enable the effective management of finances, in line with the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance, the Scheme of Delegation and agreed corporate financial regulations.

Other potential decision(s) and why these have not been recommended

126. Not applicable.

Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Legal

127. The proposed recommendations are consistent with and will promote the achievement of the Council's legal duty to achieve Best Value.

Strategic priorities and risks

128. The revenue and capital budgets form part of the Council's Policy Framework. All proposed variations set out in this report are in line with authority delegated to the Executive.

129. In line with the Council's Risk Management Policy, the corporate Strategic Risk Register will be reported to this Executive as part of the Corporate Performance Update: Quarter One 2022/23

Human Rights, Equality and Data Protection

130. As reported to Council on 23 February 2022, no negative differential impact on diverse groups and communities are anticipated from the Council's planned budgetary expenditure.

Financial

131. It is proposed that a transfer of £5.665m additional temporary budget to the Children's Care budget in 2022/23 only, to correspond with the current MTFP 3-year plan, is actioned. This is funded by £3.702m from centrally held contingency budgets and £1.963m from the Social Care Transformation Reserve.

132. Following the approval of the above proposed transfer, the Council's revenue year-end outturn position for 2022/23 is currently projected to be an overspend of £9.012m.

133. The Council's financial position will potentially be improved by the proposed potential implementation of a Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy in 2022/23 to fund transformation costs across the Council, particularly within Children's Services. This is required to be approved by Full Council on 7 September 2022.

134. It should be noted that the current projected outturn position will have a negative impact on the Council's current Medium Term Financial Plan and that the ongoing financial challenges will continue into 2023/24 and future years. The position is currently being assessed and will be reported to Members in due course as part of future Medium Term Financial Plan updates and as part of the budget strategy for 2023/24 to Executive and Council. It should be noted that there is currently a great deal of uncertainty in forecasting created by the pay award, inflationary pressures and the impact on demand for services.

135. The 2022/23 capital budget predicted year-end outturn as at Quarter One is £90.614m, which if approved will become the revised Investment Strategy budget for 2022/23 as shown in Appendix 2.

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Mitigation in the form of revenue budget spending controls set out in the main body of the report will continue to be applied to Directorates as stated.	Director of Finance	31/3/23
Actions outlined within the body of the report in relation to overspending within Children's Care will continue to be implemented.	Director of Children's Services	31/3/23
If approved, adoption of the revised Investment Strategy included at Appendix 2.	Head of Financial Planning & Support	30/9/22

Appendices

1	Proposed revenue budget virements above £150,000 at Quarter One 2022/23
2	Proposed revised Investment Strategy to 2024/25
3	Detail of projected reserves and provisions as at Quarter One 2022/23

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Council	Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy	20/10/21
Council	Revenue Budget, Council Tax, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Strategy 2022/23	23/2/22
Council	Refreshing the Strategic Plan workplan for the 2022-24 period	5/4/22

Contact: Andrew Humble, Head of Financial Planning & Support
Email: andrew_humble@middlesbrough.gov.uk

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Appendix 1 : Proposed revenue budget virements above £150,000 at Quarter One 2022/23

<i>Proposed Virement Request</i>	Regeneration & Culture £000s	Environment & Community Services £000s	Public Health £000s	Education & Partnerships £000s	Children's Care £000s	Adult Social Care £000s	Legal & Governance Services £000s	Finance £000s	Central Budgets £000s
<i>Permanent</i>									
Transfer of Prevention Efficiency to Children's Care from Education & Partnerships to match where budget sits				192	(192)				
Transfer of Community Learning budgets from Education & Partnerships to Regeneration & Culture following review	(564)			564					
Transfer of Marketing budgets from Finance to Regeneration & Culture following review	491							(491)	
Transfer of saving on Concessionary Fares Travel Scheme 2022/23	(471)								471
<i>Temporary</i>									
Transfer of 2022/23 additional temporary budget to Children's Care from Central Budgets and Reserves					5,665				(5,665)
Transfer of saving on Concessionary Fares Travel Scheme (one-off refund element)	(240)								240
Total Virement	(784)	0	0	756	5,473	0	0	(491)	(4,954)
								Total:	0

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Appendix 2: Proposed Revised Investment Strategy to 2024/25

	Total Funding Required					Council Funding £'000	External Funding £'000
	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	TOTAL £'000		
Regeneration and Culture							
Town Centre Related Projects	1,250	954	1,021	-	3,225	2,264	961
Middlehaven Related Projects	73	507	-	-	580	563	17
Housing Growth	176	446	3,046	-	3,668	3,668	-
BOHO X	7,345	16,490	-	-	23,835	1,362	22,473
BOHO 8	13	21	-	-	34	-	34
Brownfield Housing Fund	1,542	1,389	4,991	-	7,922	-	7,922
Towns Fund	1,030	2,605	10,101	4,267	18,003	-	18,003
Towns Fund - East Middlesbrough Community Hub	113	626	2,361	-	3,100	2,600	500
Towns Fund - Nunthorpe Community Hub	-	-	816	-	816	-	816
Future High Streets Fund	669	7,506	5,782	-	13,957	37	13,920
Acquisition of Town Centre Properties	12,829	207	1,000	-	14,036	14,036	-
New Civic Centre Campus	1,245	5,768	-	-	7,013	7,013	-
Middlesbrough Development Company	5,349	17,981	975	-	24,305	17,884	6,421
Teesside Advanced Manufacturing Park	1,179	11	-	-	1,190	1,190	-
Teesside Advanced Manufacturing Park - Phase 2	-	250	8,570	-	8,820	8,820	-
Local Authority Delivery 2 Green Homes Grant	208	883	-	-	1,091	-	1,091
Capitalisation Of Major Schemes Salaries	530	530	530	530	2,120	2,120	-
Capitalisation of Planning Services Surveys	20	60	40	40	160	160	-
Affordable Housing Via Section 106	-	-	2,156	-	2,156	1,302	854
Highways Infrastructure Development Section 106	-	-	2,402	-	2,402	142	2,260
The Big Screen	10	-	-	-	10	10	-
A66 Throughabout	4	-	-	-	4	-	4
Mandale Interchange	90	-	-	-	90	-	90
Tees Amp Footway / Cycleway	2	-	-	-	2	-	2
Linthorpe Road Cycleway	145	1,849	-	-	1,994	-	1,994
Replacement of Ticket Machines	-	189	-	-	189	189	-
LED Street Lighting Upgrade (Phase 2)	69	-	-	-	69	69	-
Members Small Schemes	25	-	-	-	25	13	12
Grove Hill Joint Venture Projects	-	14	-	-	14	-	14
Gresham Projects	16	8	-	-	24	24	-
North Ormesby Housing Joint Venture - Section 106 funded	16	339	-	-	355	-	355
Empty Homes 2015 To 2018	89	128	-	-	217	-	217
Local Transport Plan	1,054	614	322	-	1,990	15	1,975
Town Hall Venue Development	48	-	-	-	48	48	-
Cultural Transformation	13	-	-	-	13	13	-
Theatre Winches / Lifts	13	24	-	-	37	37	-
Dorman Museum	17	3	-	-	20	20	-
Contribution To Public Arts Projects	23	-	-	-	23	23	-
Public Art Work	34	1	-	-	35	35	-
Leisure Trust Investment - Equipment	69	6	-	800	875	875	-
Stewart Park Section 106	-	45	-	-	45	-	45
Investment In Parks	39	51	-	-	90	90	-
Teessaurus Park	77	173	-	-	250	250	-
Archives Relocation	233	149	-	-	382	138	244
Capitalisation Of Transformation Expenditure (via Flexible Use of Capital Receipts)	11	-	-	-	11	11	-
Cultural Development Fund - Enhancements To Central Library & Partner Organisations	-	785	2,633	940	4,358	-	4,358
Total Regeneration & Culture	35,668	60,612	46,746	6,577	149,603	65,021	84,582

	Total Funding Required					Council Funding £'000	External Funding £'000
	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	TOTAL £'000		
Environment and Community Services							
Purchase of New Vehicles	990	940	1,200	1,200	4,330	4,330	-
Capitalisation of Wheeled Bin Replacement	100	100	100	100	400	400	-
Capitalisation of Street Furniture/Dog Fouling & Litter Bins	55	55	55	55	220	220	-
Capitalisation of Highways Maintenance	575	575	575	575	2,300	2,300	-
Property Services Building Investment	340	340	340	340	1,360	1,360	-
Parks Improvement	83	-	-	-	83	83	-
Local Transport Plan - Highways Maintenance	3,301	183	-	-	3,484	-	3,484
Street Lighting-Maintenance	648	465	468	468	2,049	2,049	-
Urban Traffic Management Control	54	237	-	-	291	-	291
Flood Prevention	67	23	-	-	90	67	23
Members Small Schemes	38	161	60	60	319	319	-
Property Asset Investment Strategy	1,236	1,547	80	1,095	3,958	3,957	1
Nunthorpe Sports Facilities	34	-	-	-	34	-	34
East Middlesbrough Community Hub	75	-	-	-	75	75	-
Section 106 Ormesby Beck	-	15	-	-	15	-	15
Section 106 Cypress Road	-	20	-	-	20	-	20
Hostile Vehicle Mitigation	243	131	-	-	374	374	-
Transporter Bridge	523	-	-	-	523	261	262
Bridges & Structures (non Local Transport Plan)	141	1,885	-	-	2,026	2,026	-
Henry Street	47	17	-	-	64	-	64
CCTV	31	369	-	-	400	400	-
Captain Cook Public House	726	-	-	-	726	538	188
Outer Area Shopping Centres	40	-	-	-	40	40	-
Waste Procurement Project	176	-	-	-	176	176	-
Lighting up the Town	200	-	-	-	200	200	-
Town Hall Roof	-	500	1,500	1,000	3,000	3,000	-
Municipal Buildings Refurbishment	-	-	1,500	-	1,500	1,500	-
Resolution House	22	87	500	-	609	609	-
Central Library WC	-	87	-	-	87	87	-
Cleveland Centre	-	626	1,344	-	1,970	1,970	-
Cargo Fleet Nature Reserve	6	94	-	-	100	-	100
Towns Fund Initiatives	-	778	-	-	778	-	778
Traffic Signals -Tees Valley Combined Authority	126	374	-	-	500	-	500
Hemlington MUGA	-	30	-	-	30	30	-
Capitalisation Of Transformation Expenditure (via Flexible Use of Capital Receipts)	263	-	-	-	263	263	-
Changing Places Toilet - Albert Park	-	65	-	-	65	10	55
Highways Infrastructure	-	2,000	6,500	6,500	15,000	15,000	-
Total Environment and Community Services	10,140	11,704	14,222	11,393	47,459	41,644	5,815

	Total Funding Required				
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	TOTAL
Public Health	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Health & Wellbeing Hub	-	-	756	-	756
Relocation of the Safe Haven to Middlesbrough Bus station	-	140	35	-	175
Total Public Health	-	140	791	-	931

Council Funding	External Funding
£'000	£'000
679	77
-	175
679	252

	Total Funding Required				
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	TOTAL
Education and Partnerships	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Block Budget (Grant) Devolved Formula Capital - Various Schools	-	138	-	-	138
Block Budget (Grant) Section 106 Avant Low Gill	-	35	-	-	35
Block Budget (Grant) School Condition Allocation	-	927	-	-	927
Block Budget (Grant) Basic Needs	-	93	1,441	-	1,534
BB (GRANT): C4/ES002/002 - Special Provision Capital Fund	-	58	-	-	58
Block Budget (Grant) High Needs Provision Capital Allocation (HNPCA)	-	1,659	3,529	-	5,188
Schemes in Maintained Primary Schools	1,005	1,314	28	-	2,347
Schemes in Primary Academies	138	255	399	-	792
Schemes in Secondary Academies	(81)	2,006	414	-	2,339
Schemes in Special Schools	144	1,064	6,581	-	7,789
Capitalisation of Salary Costs	103	106	-	-	209
Contribution to New School at Middlehaven	54	1,646	-	-	1,700
Block Budget (Grant) EFA Early Years 2 Year olds Entitlement (Trajectory Project)	-	7	-	-	7
Total Education and Partnerships	1,363	9,308	12,392	-	23,063

Council Funding	External Funding
£'000	£'000
-	138
-	35
-	927
-	1,534
-	58
-	5,188
890	1,457
13	779
-	2,339
216	7,573
-	209
700	1,000
-	7
1,819	21,244

	Total Funding Required				
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	TOTAL
Children's Care	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Edge Of Care Project (Hub)	15	-	-	-	15
Rosecroft renovations	173	6	-	-	179
34 Marton Avenue, Fir Tree - Garage Conversion	246	28	-	-	274
Contact Centre - Bus Station Unit 1	76	251	-	-	327
Bathroom Refurbishment	18	3	-	-	21
Holly Lodge Sensory Room	-	78	-	-	78
Capitalisation Of Transformation Expenditure (via Flexible Use of Capital Receipts)	4,217	-	-	-	4,217
Total Children's Care	4,745	366	-	-	5,111

Council Funding	External Funding
£'000	£'000
15	-
179	-
274	-
327	-
21	-
-	78
4,217	-
5,033	78

	Total Funding Required				
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	TOTAL
Adult Social Care and Health Integration	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act - All schemes	618	723	711	610	2,662
Disabled Facilities Grant - All schemes	1,735	2,579	1,318	-	5,632
Capitalisation of Staying Put Salaries	50	50	50	50	200
Home Loans Partnership (Formerly 5 Lamps)	23	30	30	-	83
Small Schemes	-	94	-	-	94
Connect / Telecare IP Digital Switchover	75	117	-	-	192
Total Adult Social Care and Health Integration	2,501	3,593	2,109	660	8,863

Council Funding	External Funding
£'000	£'000
2,602	60
4	5,628
200	-
-	83
-	94
138	54
2,944	5,919

	Total Funding Required				
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	TOTAL
Legal and Governance Services	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Desktop Strategy / Device Refresh	366	472	-	-	838
Enterprise Agreements	587	954	-	-	1,541
CRM	31	65	-	-	96
IT Refresh - Network Refresh	69	379	-	-	448
IT Refresh - Lights On	338	425	-	-	763
ICT Essential Refresh & Licensing	270	1,518	1,865	2,185	5,838
ICT Innovation Budget	12	-	-	-	12
GIS Replacement	36	43	-	-	79
Prevention & Partnership Tablets	3	67	-	-	70
SharePoint	-	518	-	-	518
HR Pay	-	37	-	-	37
Capitalisation Of Transformation Expenditure (via Flexible Use of Capital Receipts)	526	-	-	-	526
Total Legal and Governance Services	2,238	4,478	1,865	2,185	10,766

Council Funding	External Funding
£'000	£'000
838	-
1,541	-
96	-
448	-
763	-
5,838	-
12	-
79	-
70	-
518	-
37	-
526	-
10,766	-

	Total Funding Required				
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	TOTAL
Finance	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Former Partnership Investment (ICT Infrastructure Revenues & Benefits)	130	167	100	-	397
Business World Upgrade	8	27	-	-	35
Derisking Sites	97	219	1,355	900	2,571
Capitalisation of Property Finance Lease Arrangements	-	-	3,500	1,000	4,500
White Feather Project North Ormesby	9	-	-	-	9
Total Finance	244	413	4,955	1,900	7,512

Council Funding	External Funding
£'000	£'000
397	-
35	-
2,571	-
4,500	-
9	-
7,512	-

	Total Funding Required				
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	TOTAL
ALL DIRECTORATES	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Total ALL DIRECTORATES	56,899	90,614	83,080	22,715	253,308

Council Funding	External Funding
£'000	£'000
135,418	117,890

	Total Funding				
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	TOTAL
FUNDED BY:	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Borrowing	22,596	37,620	31,339	11,813	103,368
Finance Leases			3,500	1,000	4,500
Capital Receipts	13,482	2,694	6,106	4,695	26,977
Grants	18,715	45,382	38,490	5,124	107,711
Contributions	2,085	4,433	3,578	83	10,179
Revenue Resources	21	485	67		573
Funding from Reserves	-	-	-	-	-
Total FUNDING	56,899	90,614	83,080	22,715	253,308

Council Funding	External Funding
£'000	£'000
103,368	-
4,500	-
26,977	-
-	107,711
-	10,179
573	-
-	-
135,418	117,890

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Appendix 3: Detail of projected reserves and provisions as at Quarter One 2022/23

Reserves and Provisions 2022/23	Opening Balance	Proposed Use in Year	Additional Contributions	Transfers between reserves	Transfers from / (to) General Fund	Projected Balance at Year-End
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
General Fund Reserve	11,183		858			12,041
Earmarked Reserve	7,072	(1,963)				5,109
- Social Care Transformation Reserve						
Earmarked for specific purposes						
Public Health Reserves	668	(553)				115
Adult Social Care Covid Recovery Reserve	1,530	(651)				879
Business Rates Deficit Reserve	6,617					6,617
Business Rates Risk Reserve	1,877					1,877
Business Rates Relief Reserve	49					49
Change Fund	174		230			404
Insurance Fund (MBC)	116					116
CCC Insurance Fund	0					0
Insurance Fund (Fire)	0					0
Car Parking Pressures Reserve	782	(266)				516
Other Reserves & Provisions	13,937					13,937
Earmarked Reserves	25,750	(1,470)	230	0	0	24,510
Earmarked Reserve	(3,756)	(1,544)				(5,300)
- Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Reserve						
School balances	4,802					4,802
Provisions	1,921				0	1,921
TOTAL	46,972	(4,977)	1,088	0	0	43,083

NOTE

That the projected year-end balances do not currently include how the final revenue outturn at year-end 2022/23 will be funded, as it is hoped that the implementation of the revenue budget controls, outlined in paragraphs 88 to 91, will reduce the current projected overspend by the end of 2022/23. The final revenue outturn at year-end 2022/23 will be funded from Reserves, with the remaining £5.109m Social Care Transformation Reserve initially being used.

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MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	
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Report of:	Executive Member for Finance & Governance Director for Finance
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Submitted to:	Executive
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Date:	6 September 2022
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Title:	Proposal to Progress the Development of Nunthorpe Community Centre
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Report for:	Decision
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Status:	Public
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Strategic priority:	Physical environment
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Key decision:	Yes
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Why:	Decision(s) will incur expenditure or savings above £150,000
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Urgent:	No
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Why:	N/A
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Executive summary

This report seeks approval for the process to develop a community centre within the Nunthorpe ward. The report sets out the following:

- The previous process undertaken to identify a suitable organisation to develop a community centre and documents the issues regarding this.
- The options for a revised process including both a new bidding process, and the alternative consultative process which details the council undertaking the management of the build phase.
- A recommendation to pursue a community engagement exercise to determine the preferred location for the community centre, the tender for the build phase led by the council and a process for the identification for a community organisation to run the asset which will be undertaken during the build phase.
- The report re-affirms the commitment of finances available for the project from the Towns Fund, with a further commitment of £100k from Local authority capital resources, once all other grant funds are exhausted.

Purpose

1. To seek approval for the proposals to progress the development of the community centre provision within Nunthorpe ward.

Background and relevant information

2. Middlesbrough Council have committed to funding the development of a community centre within Nunthorpe Ward and have identified £900k from the Towns Fund to support the development of the centre.
3. The Council received interest from separate organisations proposing a community centre at two separate locations. Location 1 being next to the new medical centre, and location 2 being at Nunthorpe & Marton Playing Field Association.
4. A bidding process was developed in Autumn 2021 in order to identify the most appropriate organisation to design, build and manage the community centre. The process was a two stage bidding process in which initial expressions of interest were submitted, with further refinement at stage 2. The deadline for submissions at stage 2 was 17th December 2021.
5. The bidding process was independently evaluated by external stakeholders, along with Middlesbrough Council staff, and a conclusion was reached regarding a successful bidder. This however was challenged and further scrutiny was undertaken concerning the building cost detail. As a result the successful bid was subject to scrutiny from the Council's Quantity surveyor and it was determined there were issues with the build costs. The same scrutiny was provided to the second bid which was deemed acceptable.
6. On review of the process undertaken the Council's section 151 officer concluded that whilst the process had sought to be as flexible as possible it had not been clear from the outset in regard to key parameters. The process had focussed primarily on building management, rather than design and build, and as such the scrutiny on design and build was undertaken towards the latter part of the evaluation and was not articulated at the outset. This was therefore challengeable.
7. As a result of the section 151 officer review it was concluded the process be paused and reconsidered in terms of approach.
8. A revised approach has now been identified which removes a central bidding process and seeks to resolve the key issue of location, by engagement with the community. The revised process will also involve the council managing the build phase, and during the build phase a process will be undertaken to appoint an organisation to run the community facility once built.

What decision(s) are being recommended?

That the Executive:

Agree to the following proposed plan to develop the Community centre at Nunthorpe

- Consult the community on which of the two available locations that is the site

next to the GP surgery or the current site of the NMPFA building the community would prefer a community centre to be located. The residents of Nunthorpe will be engaged specifically on their preference regarding the location of the community centre and not the historic supporters or proposed management options associated currently associated with those sites. The consultation exercise will be managed by the council and will outline two locations from which ward residents will select a preference.

- The Consultation process will run for a fixed period of 6 weeks
- Following the outcome of the consultation the council will manage the community centre development at the preferred site
- During the build a process will be progressed to select a community organisation to manage the new community asset.
- Approve an additional £100k from council capital resources due to increased construction costs, once all other grant funds are exhausted.

Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

9. Within this project, location is the key factor. Once the location is determined and agreed, the build and management of the centre can follow due process. The community should be involved and consulted on the location as the community will utilise the centre. Once the location is determined the council will oversee the development phase, during which a process can be twin tracked to agree an appropriate organisation to manage the facility in the long term. This option should minimise demands on community organisations, and ensure the outcome delivered is the one the majority of ward residents support.

Other potential decision(s) and why these have not been recommended

10. The alternative course of action is to re-run the bidding exercise with clearly defined parameters from the outset, however this has is not recommended for the following reasons:
 - Community organisations have already expended significant time and resource in the bidding exercise
 - The expectation for a community organisation to manage a £1million build is significant, the risk is high for the Town fund resource and as such it is appropriate for the council to manage the construction to mitigate risks in this area.
 - Tension within the community and within community groups would be heightened through running this exercise, the council has a responsibility to assist with community relations and following discussion at Nunthorpe Parish council, community views have been taken on board.

Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Legal

11. The construction phase will follow the local authorities standard procurement processes and a competitive process will be followed to ensure value for money is obtained for design and build. The revised Community Asset policy process will be undertaken if required to secure an appropriate organisation to manage the asset, this process will be undertaken during the build phase.

Strategic priorities and risks

12. This links to the following key strategic priority as outlined in the revised strategic plan:
- We will transform our town centre, improving accessibility, revitalising unused assets, developing iconic new spaces and building more town centre homes.

The specific milestone linked to this priority is:

- Commence work on Nunthorpe community centre –June 2023

Human Rights, Equality and Data Protection

13.A Level 1 (Initial Screening) Impact Assessment (IA) accompanies this report at Appendix 1, and has found there to be no impact at stage one.

Financial

14. The Towns Fund has identified £750k for the development of the community centre, along with additional section 106 fund results in an overall budget of £866k. In addition the council has identified a further £100k reflective of the increasing costs of materials since this project was initially agreed. The construction phase will be subject to an appropriate competitive tender process and will be managed by the council’s regeneration team.

15. Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
To develop the detailed project plan with milestones for the key phases of community centre development	Louise Grabham	30 th November 2022

Appendices

1	Impact Assessment
2	
3	

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date

Contact: Louise Grabham 2022
 Email: louise_grabham@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Template for Impact Assessment Level 1: Initial screening assessment

Subject of assessment:	Development of Nunthorpe Community centre			
Coverage:	Crosscutting			
This is a decision relating to:	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service	<input type="checkbox"/> Function
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Process/procedure	<input type="checkbox"/> Programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Review
	<input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)		
It is a:	New approach:		Revision of an existing approach:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
It is driven by:	Legislation:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local or corporate requirements:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key aims, objectives and activities <p>Revision of a process to include community consultation on location of the community centre, and management of the design and build process by the local authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences from any previous approach <p>Bidding process for community groups to undertake the full design, build and management of the centre from outset.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key stakeholders and intended beneficiaries (internal and external as appropriate) <p>The Council, primarily residents of Nunthorpe, community groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended outcomes <p>To achieve better value for money, and enhanced service offer and offer improved community facilities</p>			
Live date:	Commencement of project process September 2022			
Lifespan:	September 2022 – December 2023			
Date of next review:	N/a			

Screening questions	Response			Evidence
	No	Yes	Uncertain	
Human Rights Could the decision impact negatively on individual Human Rights as enshrined in UK legislation?*	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The approval from Executive will ensure that a clear process is in place to determine the location of the centre following consultation with residents in the Nunthorpe ward.
Equality Could the decision result in adverse differential impacts on groups or individuals with characteristics protected in UK equality law? Could the decision impact differently on other commonly disadvantaged groups?*	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires that when exercising its functions the Councils must have due regard to the need to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act; • advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and • foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. <p>In having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity, the Council must consider, as part of a single equality duty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic; • taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it; and • encouraging people who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation is low. <p>Throughout both the consultation process and equally the design and build full consideration will be given to the requirements of the PSED</p>
Community cohesion Could the decision impact negatively on relationships between different groups, communities of interest or neighbourhoods within the town?*	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This process is being implemented following consultation and feedback with Nunthorpe Parish Council and other groups. The management by the local authority of the design and build stage will assist in maintaining good community relationships within the Nunthorpe ward.
Next steps: ➡ If the answer to all of the above screening questions is No then the process is completed. ➡ If the answer of any of the questions is Yes or Uncertain, then a Level 2 Full Impact Assessment must be completed.				

* Consult the Impact Assessment further guidance appendix for details on the issues covered by each of these broad questions prior to completion.

Assessment completed by:	Louise Grabham	Head of Service:	
Date:	29 th July 2022	Date:	

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MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL



Report of:	Executive Member for Finance and Governance Executive Member for Regeneration Director of Finance Director of Regeneration
Submitted to:	Executive
Date:	6 September 2022
Title:	Increased Enforcement Against Problem Properties
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Strategic priority:	Physical environment
Key decision:	Yes
Why:	Decision(s) will have a significant impact in two or more wards
Urgent:	No
Why:	N/A

Executive summary

This report outlines the impact of empty and problem properties, streets and gardens in disrepair in Middlesbrough and proposes the delivery approach for increased enforcement against them. The measures include production of an Empty Homes Strategy, a cross-directorate Problem Properties Action Plan and the introduction of a new role of Investigations and Enforcement Manager which is designed to govern the activities necessary to respond to these issues.

The proposed decision is that Executive approves:

- a) The delivery approach for increased enforcement against problem properties.
- b) The introduction of a new permanent role of Investigations and Enforcement Manager.

Purpose

1. To seek approval of the proposed delivery approach for increased enforcement against problem properties, including the introduction of the role of Investigations and Enforcement Manager.

Background and relevant information

2. On 20 December 2019 Executive approved the “Reducing Empty Homes in Middlesbrough” report to proactively address the rising number of empty homes in the town through: the investment of £1.5m in reducing empty homes in Newport and North Ormesby; increasing the Council Tax Empty Home Premium in April 2020 from 50% to 100% after two years, and by a further 100% once the property has been empty for five years; and the creation of a full time role within the Revenue and Benefits Service on an ‘invest to save’ basis to reduce avoidance and increase the collection of Council Tax on empty homes.
3. Building on this initiative, on 5 April 2022 a report was submitted to Executive for approval of the proposed refreshed Strategic Plan workplan 2022-24, including utilisation of £40K per annum to increase enforcement activity against problem properties, streets and gardens in disrepair, subject to an individual Executive report on the approach to delivery.
4. According to Council Tax records in Middlesbrough there are currently 2,211 empty homes, of which: 584 have been empty for less than 6 months, 764 have been empty between 6 months and 2 years and 439 properties have been empty for more than 2 years. There are several appropriate reasons why properties can be temporarily empty, such as undergoing renovation or the homeowner could be in a care home or may have recently died and probate is ongoing. However some properties may have been deliberately left empty for investment purposes, for others the owner/landlord cannot afford to carry out essential repairs or the owner cannot be traced, and the property falls into disrepair.
5. In addition to empty homes, Middlesbrough has an unquantified number of problem properties, streets and gardens in poor and potentially dangerous condition. Problem occupied properties and those that have been empty for longer than 6 months diminish local housing needs and can have a severely detrimental impact on neighbourhoods. These homes attract anti-social behaviour, increased crime rates and fire risks; and decrease local property values and outside investment opportunities.
6. It is therefore essential for the physical, social and economic wellbeing of the town that the number of empty and problem properties be effectively monitored and ultimately reduced. Currently responsibility for tackling problem properties is split between the Regeneration and Culture directorate, responsible for the town’s physical, social and economic regeneration; the Stronger Communities service, responsible for community safety and neighbourhood management; Environment Services responsible for environmental enforcement and area care; and the Resident and Business Support service responsible for collection, debt recovery, anti-fraud investigation and the investigation of empty properties and working with landlords to encourage reoccupation/development. Whilst there is a significant amount of activity that occurs across the organisation very little is joined up. Consequently, a cohesive and co-ordinated strategy for tackling problem properties and reducing empty homes is needed.

7. Although the report primarily focuses on residential properties, the principles and approach will also extend to commercial properties in line with relevant legislation and legal obligations/requirements.

Proposed Delivery Approach for Increased Enforcement against Problem Properties

8. An Empty Homes Strategy and a cross-directorate Problem Properties Action Plan are being introduced to identify, monitor, address and ultimately reduce these properties in Middlesbrough. The benefits will be an increase in potential Council Tax collection rates and empty homes premiums to support the medium term financial plan, meeting local housing needs, better housing conditions, attraction of increased investment into the town, assistance in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and maximisation of both physical and social regeneration outcomes.
9. The Empty Homes Strategy and Problem Properties Action Plan will be governed and delivered by the Investigation Team within the Resident and Business Support service, working collaboratively with the Regeneration directorate, Public Protection and Community Safety team. The Investigation Team will be responsible for setting up an empty homes register in Middlesbrough, using all information held within services in Middlesbrough Council, and also giving residents the opportunity to report empty/problem homes in their area that may be having a negative impact from a social, physical and economic perspective.
10. Once problem properties are identified, individual owners and landlords will be contacted in the first instance and be given advice and support to assist them with turning their property into productive, occupied and acceptable condition.
11. Where contact cannot be made, properties will be visited to gather further intelligence and evidence based on a RAG status for priority investigation. If the owner or landlord does not want to engage with the team, varying forms of enforcement action can be employed. As appropriate for the individual circumstances, action can range from default works being carried out and the owner/landlord recharged for the works completed; forced sale of a property either by acquiring a Charge on the property or through a Compulsory Purchase Order; or an Empty Dwelling Management Order could be applied for in order to take control of the property for a period.

Introduction of an Investigations and Enforcement Manager

12. The proposed new role of Investigations and Enforcement Manager will be to manage the two existing Investigation Officers within the Resident and Business Support service, and lead, co-ordinate and govern the delivery of cross-directorate actions within the Empty Homes Strategy and Problem Properties Action Plan to progress these properties, streets and gardens to a satisfactory conclusion. The role will also support in the approach to help maximise Net Collectable Debt, support improvements in council tax collection and recovery; and reduce property fraud.

What decision(s) are being recommended?

13. The proposed decision is that Executive approves:
 - a) The delivery approach for increased enforcement against problem properties.

- b) The introduction of a permanent role of Investigations and Enforcement Manager.

Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

14. Approval was granted on 5 April 2022 for the refreshed Strategic Plan workplan 2022-24, including utilisation of £40K per annum to increase enforcement activity against problem properties, streets and gardens in disrepair, subject to a further individual Executive report seeking approval on the approach to delivery.
15. The approval of the proposed approach, including a new role of Investigations and Enforcement Manager, will aid with the implementation of the Empty Homes Strategy and Problem Properties Action Plan to identify, address and reduce the impact of these properties in Middlesbrough.

Other potential decision(s) and why these have not been recommended

16. No other potential decisions have been recommended as the approach is in response to directed actions with the Council's Strategic Plan workplan as approved by Executive on 5 April 2022.

Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Legal

17. There are no legal requirements for the council to hold an empty homes strategy.
18. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 allows local authorities to charge an Empty Homes Premium from 1 April 2013 to provide a stronger incentive get homes back into productive use and remove the blight of such properties on local neighbourhoods.
19. The Housing Act 2004 provides local authorities with legal powers for the enforcement of housing standards which cover improvement notices, prohibition orders and hazard awareness notices, and includes Empty Dwelling Management Orders.

Strategic priorities and risks

20. The proposed scheme will directly address and support delivery of strategic priority action ASB 07 "Increase enforcement against problem properties / streets / gardens in disrepair" within the Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour priority in the Council's Strategic Plan workplan 2022-24.
21. *People*: Reducing the negative impact of empty homes and problem properties will improve the quality of life of residents. By reducing fraud and increasing Net Collectable Debt and empty property premium recovery, the proposals will support the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and protect vital public resources and services for local people.
22. *Place*: The proposals will assist in meeting local housing needs, improve housing conditions, assist in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and maximise both physical and social regeneration outcomes within the town.

23. *Business*: By reducing empty homes and problem properties, the Council will be improving business opportunities for further inward investment into Middlesbrough.

24. This policy will impact on and address the following risks:

- O1-052 - Substantial areas of the town have high residential voids/low sales values and high population churn, effectively creating market failure resulting in significant social consequences which in turn have implications for Council resources and service delivery. Should the recommendations not be approved, Middlesbrough could see the number of empty properties continue to rise, causing further problems notwithstanding the negative impact this has on communities.
- Preventing Council Tax premium avoidance, and the additional Managerial resource focused on investigation of empty and problem properties will contribute to achieving maximum impact from the measures and ensure that risks relating to Council Tax collection levels (08-054 & 08-075) and the Medium Term Financial Plan (08-059) are mitigated.

Human Rights, Equality and Data Protection

25. An initial assessment has been undertaken, which did not identify any significant issues at this stage.

Financial

26. The cost of the proposed Investigations and Enforcement Manager, job evaluated at Grade L, is £46,172 including basic salary and on costs.

27. £40,000 of the cost has been provided for from within the Regeneration and Culture budget to deliver action ASB 07 “Increase enforcement against problem properties / streets / gardens in disrepair” within the Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour priority in the Council’s Strategic Plan workplan 2022-24. The remainder will be financed from the existing Resident and Business Support budget.

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Empty Homes Strategy to be produced.	Janette Savage	31 st October 2022
Recruitment of Investigations and Enforcement Manager	Janette Savage	30 th November 2022
Develop and introduce a cross-directorate Action Plan to assess and address the issue across Middlesbrough of problem properties, streets gardens	Nicola Mearns	31 st March 2023

Appendices

1	Impact Assessment
2	
3	

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Middlesbrough Council	Executive Report - Reducing Empty Homes in Middlesbrough	20 December 2019
Middlesbrough Council	Executive Report - Refreshing the Strategic Plan workplan for the 2022-24 period	5 April 2022

Contact: Janette Savage - Head of Resident & Business Support.

Email: Janette_savage@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Template for Impact Assessment Level 1: Initial screening assessment

Subject of assessment:	Increased Enforcement Against Problem Properties			
Coverage:	Crosscutting			
This is a decision relating to:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategy	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy	<input type="checkbox"/> Service	<input type="checkbox"/> Function
	<input type="checkbox"/> Process/procedure	<input type="checkbox"/> Programme	<input type="checkbox"/> Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Review
	<input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)		
It is a:	New approach:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Revision of an existing approach:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
It is driven by:	Legislation:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local or corporate requirements:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Description:	<p>Key aims, objectives and activities To assess the impact of proceeding with the delivery approach for increased enforcement against problem properties.</p> <p>Statutory drivers The Council does not have a statutory legal obligation to hold an empty homes strategy, however the proposed approach will contribute towards the Council’s delivery of strategic priority action ASB 07 “Increase enforcement against problem properties / streets / gardens in disrepair” within the Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour priority in the Council’s Strategic Plan workplan 2022-24. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 allows local authorities to charge an Empty Homes Premium from 1 April 2013 to provide a stronger incentive get homes back into productive use and remove the blight of such properties on local neighbourhoods. The Housing Act 2004 provides local authorities with legal powers for the enforcement of housing standards which cover improvement notices, prohibition orders and hazard awareness notices, and includes Empty Dwelling Management Orders.</p> <p>Differences from any previous approach Current and previous empty homes and problem property intervention schemes have operated in silos within Council directorates. The proposed delivery approach for increased enforcement against problem properties including the Empty Homes Strategy and Problem Properties Action Plan, along with the introduction of a new permanent role of Investigations and Enforcement Manager to govern them, will provide a sound basis of priority objectives upon which to prepare coordinated actions relating to addressing problem properties, and will set out a new strategic approach for maximising the benefits to our communities.</p> <p>Key stakeholders and intended beneficiaries (internal and external as appropriate) The key stakeholders are: the Council; local community; and local strategic partners.</p> <p>Intended outcomes. To seek the adoption of the new delivery approach for increased enforcement against problem properties.</p>			
Live date:	Executive will consider the Increased Enforcement Against Problem Properties report on 6th September 2022.			
Lifespan:	Until replaced by a future strategy.			

Date of next review:

September 2023

Screening questions	Response			Evidence
	No	Yes	Uncertain	
<p>Human Rights</p> <p>Could the decision impact negatively on individual Human Rights as enshrined in UK legislation?*</p>	☒	☐	☐	<p>The Increased Enforcement Against Problem Properties approach has been prepared by a cross-directorate governance board of directors and heads of service, in consultation with key stakeholders. The emerging Empty Homes Strategy and Problem Properties Action Plan will be prepared in accordance with the legislation, national policy and local consultation standards, and will provide opportunities for all sectors of the community to benefit from improved housing and neighbourhood conditions.</p> <p>In light of the above, it is not considered that the report will have an adverse impact on individuals in terms of human rights.</p>
<p>Equality</p> <p>Could the decision result in adverse differential impacts on groups or individuals with characteristics protected in UK equality law? Could the decision impact differently on other commonly disadvantaged groups?*</p>	☒	☐	☐	<p>The Increased Enforcement Against Problem Properties approach has been prepared by a cross-directorate governance board of directors and heads of service, in consultation with key stakeholders. The emerging Empty Homes Strategy and Problem Properties Action Plan will be prepared in accordance with the legislation, national policy and local consultation standards, and will provide opportunities for all sectors of the community to benefit from improved housing and neighbourhood conditions.</p> <p>In light of the above, it is not considered that the report will have an adverse impact on different groups or individuals in terms of equality.</p>

* Consult the Impact Assessment further guidance appendix for details on the issues covered by each of these broad questions prior to completion.

Screening questions	Response			Evidence
<p>Community cohesion Could the decision impact negatively on relationships between different groups, communities of interest or neighbourhoods within the town?*</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Increased Enforcement Against Problem Properties approach has been prepared by a cross-directorate governance board of directors and heads of service, in consultation with key stakeholders. The emerging Empty Homes Strategy and Problem Properties Action Plan will be prepared in accordance with the legislation, national policy and local consultation standards, and will provide opportunities for all sectors of the community to benefit from improved housing and neighbourhood conditions.</p> <p>In light of the above, it is not considered that the report will have an adverse impact on relationships between different groups, communities of interest or neighbourhoods within the town.</p>

Next steps:

- If the answer to all of the above screening questions is No then the process is completed.
- If the answer of any of the questions is Yes or Uncertain, then a Level 2 Full Impact Assessment must be completed.

Assessment completed by:	Nicola Mearns	Head of Service:	Janette Savage
Date:	04.08.22	Date:	

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	
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Report of:	Executive Member for Regeneration Director for Regeneration
Submitted to:	Executive
Date:	6 September 2022
Title:	Nunthorpe Neighbourhood Area Application
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Strategic priority:	Physical environment
Key decision:	Yes
Why:	Decision(s) will have a significant impact in two or more wards
Urgent:	No
Why:	N/A

Executive summary	
<p>This report seeks a determination on a Neighbourhood Area application submitted by Nunthorpe Parish Council (see Appendix 1), in order that the Parish Council can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>Taking into account the legislation and all of the comments received, and also the changes being proposed through the Community Governance Review, it is recommended that the Executive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. approve the request to designate the Neighbourhood Area application, as submitted (see Appendix 1) in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011), and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. 	

Purpose

1. To seek a determination on an application submitted by Nunthorpe Parish Council for Neighbourhood Area status, in order to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan.

Background and relevant information

2. Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011), applications can be made to local planning authorities to designate Neighbourhood Areas, in order to facilitate the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans.
3. The designation of a Neighbourhood Area enables the relevant body to establish a vision and general planning policies for the development, and use of land in their designated neighbourhood. This takes the form of a Neighbourhood Plan, which the relevant body prepares. Neighbourhood Plans form part of the Statutory Development Plan for the area.
4. When deciding on a Neighbourhood Area boundary the Government has provided guidance on what to take into account:
 - village or settlement boundaries, which could reflect areas of planned expansion;
 - a catchment area for walking to local services such as shops, primary schools, doctors' surgery, parks or other facilities;
 - an area where formal or informal networks of community based groups operate;
 - the physical appearance or characteristics of the neighbourhood, for example buildings may be of a consistent scale or style;
 - whether the area forms all or part of a coherent estate either for businesses or residents;
 - whether the area is wholly or predominantly a business area;
 - whether infrastructure or physical features define a natural boundary, for example a major road or railway line or waterway;
 - the natural setting or features in an area; and the size of the population (living and working) in the area.
5. A Neighbourhood Area boundary can also be based on an administrative boundary such as an electoral Ward or postal district.
6. On 25th March 2022, Nunthorpe Parish Council submitted an application to designate a Neighbourhood Area to the Council. As the proposed area also covers land outside our borough, a similar application was also made to Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council.
7. The proposed Neighbourhood Area is somewhat unusual in that it includes both parished and non-parished parts of our borough, incorporating all or part of two Middlesbrough Ward boundaries, as well as extending into a neighbouring local authority administrative area (see Appendix 1).
8. Prior to submitting the application, a significant amount of consultation took place between Nunthorpe Parish Council, and Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland Borough Councils. Due to the complexities associated with multiple administrative

authorities, Locality (provides advice and financial support to local communities wishing to undertake Neighbourhood Planning) also provided support to the Parish Council. During these discussions, it was agreed that Middlesbrough Council would be the lead local planning authority, although all matters relating to the Redcar & Cleveland part of the application would remain the legal responsibility of Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council.

Consideration of the application

9. In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, upon receipt of a valid Neighbourhood Area application, Councils are required to make a determination regarding the designation of the area within 20 weeks.
10. Prior to validating the applications, both councils sought internal legal advice as to whether the application accorded with the Regulations. Once the application was deemed to be valid, the Councils undertook a joint six-week public consultation event between 19th May and 4th July 2022.
11. Consultation was undertaken in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, using the following methods of engagement:
 - i. details of the applications were placed on the Council's website and consultation portal, along with how representations could be made;
 - ii. 793 letters and 819 emails were sent out to statutory consultees, the local community and other stakeholders contained on the planning policy consultation database, advising them about the consultation event; and
 - iii. public notices were placed in and around the proposed Neighbourhood Area boundary, detailing how representations could be made, along with the dates of the consultation period, and how copies of the application could be obtained.
12. In addition, Nunthorpe Parish Council undertook its own notification of the public consultation event via its Parish Newsletter and social media platform.

Responses received

13. The Council received 31 responses during the consultation; 22 responses were in support of the application, four objected, and five did not wish to comment at this stage of the process. Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council received four responses, all in support of the application.
14. Of the four objections, three were subsequently withdrawn following the close of the consultation period and have, therefore, not been taken into account. The remaining objection was in relation to the Brethren Church site, (which is currently straddles the boundary between Nunthorpe and Marton East Ward), citing concerns to the site being included in the proposed Neighbourhood Area given other properties on that side of the road are in Marton. However, part of the Church site is already within Nunthorpe, along with other residential properties to the north of Gypsy Lane. In addition, the Community Governance Review (see below) also recommends including this site within the revised Nunthorpe boundary.

15. One of the responses received, although in support of the application, also requested that both borough Councils consider amending the proposed Neighbourhood Area boundary to instead align to the larger St. Mary's Church Parish boundary. The larger church parish boundary extends beyond the proposed Neighbourhood Area taking in part of Marton West Ward, as well as additional land outside our borough in both Redcar & Cleveland and Hambleton.
16. Officers have considered the above suggestion, concluding that it would be inappropriate for the following reasons:
- the proposal would incorporate land within the area of Guisborough Town Council in Redcar & Cleveland, which has previously indicated that it did not wish to be a part of the original Neighbourhood Area application; the proposed amended boundary would include land that already forms part of the designated Marton West Neighbourhood Area making it ineligible for inclusion within another neighbourhood area; and
 - the inclusion of land within Hambleton District would add a further layer of administrative complexity, which would be unnecessary particularly given it was not part of the original application.
17. All of the valid representations received by both Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland Borough Councils are attached at Appendix 2.

Community Governance Review

18. On 22nd July 2022, the Council's Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee agreed a report recommending that both the Nunthorpe Ward and Parish Boundaries be put forward for revision. The revised boundaries would align with each other and also take in additional areas that are currently within the Marton East Ward. These proposed changes are similar to the proposed Neighbourhood Area, although there are slight differences.
19. The next stage of this review is to undertake a period of public consultation, following which any changes would be made by a Reorganisation of Community Governance Order.

Conclusion

20. Taking into account the legislation and all of the comments received, and also the changes being proposed through the Community Governance Review, it is considered that the most appropriate recommendation is to approve the proposed area, in order to align with the proposed revised Nunthorpe Ward and Parish Boundaries.
21. The part of the application that is within Redcar & Cleveland is a matter for that Council, and it is understood that part of the Neighbourhood Area will be designated as per the original application.

What decision(s) are being recommended?

22. That the Executive:

- i. approve the request to designate the Neighbourhood Area application, as submitted (see Appendix 1) in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011), and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

23. The rationale for the above recommendations is that Neighbourhood Areas should be based (where possible) on existing boundary lines and/or distinctive characteristics and features, as outlined above in paragraphs 4 & 5. As the existing administrative boundaries for Nunthorpe Ward and Parish are subject to imminent review, it is considered that the proposed Neighbourhood Area boundary should be aligned with the proposed boundary.

Other potential decision(s) and why these have not been recommended

24. The Council is required under the legislation to make a determination within prescribed timescales, and a determination is therefore necessary. If it does not, then the Council must designate the whole area as per the original application.

25. The alternative options that have also been considered are as follows:

- **To determine the Neighbourhood Area as proposed.** It is not considered appropriate to designate the area as proposed as it is out of alignment with the proposed Ward and Parish Boundaries.
- **To approve an alternative modified area (that is not the Ward boundary).** Only one alternative boundary has been put forward, and rejected for the reasons set out above.

Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Legal

26. The designation and establishment of Neighbourhood Areas and Forums form part of the statutory process under Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. Consultation has been undertaken in accordance with the Regulations and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

Strategic priorities and risks

27. Under the Regulations, a local authority must make a determination on a Neighbourhood Area application, within a set timescale (in this case 20 weeks, following publication of the application). The relevant risks this decision would influence are cited below, with an explanation as to why they are relevant and how it would affect each risk:

Risk No	Risk Description	Impact on the risk
O8-055	If the Council does not respond effectively and efficiently to legislative changes it could be in breach of statutory duties in relation to service delivery and fail to make the most of opportunities.	By undertaking this work the Council is ensuring compliance with the regulations and this will have a positive impact on this risk.

Human Rights, Equality and Data Protection

28. The report has been subject to an initial Impact Assessment (IA), which accompanies this report (see Appendix 3). This identifies that a full IA is not necessary. The decision does not involve the collation and use of personal data, and as such will not require a Data Protection Impact Assessment to be undertaken.

Financial

29. There are no costs associated with the decision to designate a Neighbourhood Area.

30. Following the designation of the Neighbourhood Area, the Council is eligible to apply to the Government under its Neighbourhood Planning New Burdens grant funding, which assists local planning authorities with additional neighbourhood planning costs, such as, administrative processes and undertaking the referendum.

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
A determination notice will be placed on the Council's website setting out the decision and listing the reasons for making that determination.	Head of Planning	As soon as practical after the determination of this report.

Appendices




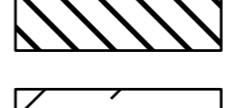


1	Proposed Neighbourhood Area Map, as submitted by Nunthorpe Parish Council
2	Representations received by Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland Borough Councils
3	Proposed Nunthorpe Neighbourhood Area Initial Impact Assessment (IA)

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
-	-	-

Contact: Charlton Gibben – Senior Planning Policy Officer.
Email: charlton_gibben@middlesbrough.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1


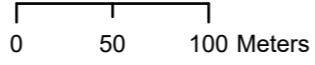

	Local Authority Boundary
	Proposed Neighbourhood Plan Area
	Unparished Area - Redcar & Cleveland
	Unparished Area - Nunthorpe Ward
	Parished Area - Nunthorpe Ward
	Area within Marton East Ward

Middlesbrough

Redcar & Cleveland

Proposed Nunthorpe Neighbourhood Plan Area

Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database right 2020

	Service Area: PLANNING		Scale: 1:6,500   Page 95
	Map Reference:	Grid Ref:	
	Map created by: JOHN MANDERS	Date - 30/5/2022	
©Crown Copyright and database rights 2019. Ordnance Survey LA10023413			

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Nunthorpe Neighbourhood Area Application – Consultation Received Representations 04.07.22

Middlesbrough Received Representations

Respondent	Do you support the application?	Summary of additional comments	Summary of Council's response
K. Thornton	Yes	-	Support noted.
R Findlay	Yes	-	Support noted.
C McArdle (re-submitted their support on 13.06.22 & 30.06.22)	Yes	-	Support noted.
G Finn	Yes	-	Support noted.
A Graham	Yes	-	Support noted.
J Graham	Yes	-	Support noted.
J Roebuck	Yes	-	Support noted.
CPRE North & East Yorkshire	Yes	-	Support noted.
W Tovey	Yes	If Nunthorpe residents wish to have any meaningful say so in the future of Nunthorpe then I sincerely hope that they will take this opportunity to support the development of a plan that will	Support noted.

		do that and at least have a community spirit for Nunthorpe regardless of which side of the railway.	
P Spaldin	Yes	-	Support noted.
K Porteous (re-submitted their support on 02.07.22)	Yes	-	Support noted.
M McClintock	Yes	-	Support noted.
Cllr. M Smiles	Yes	-	Support noted.
C Smiles	Yes	-	Support noted.
M. Marsden	Yes	-	Support noted.
W Bolland	Yes	-	Support noted.
D Kossick-Plumpton	Yes	-	Support noted.
C Mulcaster	Yes	-	Support noted.
D Leyland	Yes	-	Support noted.
A Walker	Yes	-	Support noted.
M Walker	Yes	-	Support noted.

N Markham North Yorkshire County Council	-	The Council has no comments to make on the consultation as there are no major anticipated impacts on North Yorkshire residents or services.	Comment noted.
A Sterling	No	I would like to question/object to the Brethren Church being included in the area. It appears incredibly odd on the map that the other properties on that side of the road are considered Marton but the soon to be sold (and therefore financially attractive) Brethren Church is considered Nunthorpe.	Objection noted
J Hanrahan Historic England	-	No comments to make at this stage of the process.	Comment noted.
C Hastings Natural England	-	Natural England does not wish to make comment on the suitability of the proposed plan area or the proposed neighbourhood planning body.	Comment noted.
Sport England	-	No comment at this stage of the process.	Comment noted.
S Ali National Highways	-	No comment at this stage of the process.	Comment noted.
G Cox Parochial Church Council of St Marys Church Nunthorpe	Yes	While we have no comment regarding the principals of the proposal, only that we fully endorse it, we would ask if any consideration was given to the boundaries of our Parish, which is also a public designation of Nunthorpe. We were not able to overlay the two maps easily as there was insufficient clarity on	Support noted. The request to consider expanding the boundary of the area to reflect the boundary of

		<p>the detail of the proposed area. However, looking at the maps enclosed with the papers this does not appear to be the case, as it is very clear that farmland to the east of the Nunthorpe bypass has not been included in the proposed designated area, but it is clearly within the Church Boundary. There could be other areas where the two do not correlate.</p> <p>I attach below a copy of our boundary map and would ask that, if it is not too late in the process, that the boundary for the Church Parish be included within the proposal for the Designated Area.</p> <p>Having made the above comments, we do however appreciate that this request should not stop what is in principle a very good intention. Only if time and the process permits would we ask that this suggestion is considered.</p>	<p>the church parish has been investigated by both Councils, (Middlesbrough & Redcar and Cleveland) and found not to be possible as this would incorporate land within the area of Guisborough Town Council in Redcar and Cleveland and land already forming part of Marton West Neighbourhood Area in Middlesbrough.</p> <p>Neighbourhood planning regulations prevent the overlapping of neighbourhood areas or the inclusion of areas covered by a different parish council without their cooperation.</p>
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Received Representations: 31 (although 31 representations were received during the public consultation event, 3 objections have subsequently been withdrawn, and therefore have not been included in the above table).

Supports: 22

Objections: 1

No comments: 5

Total Received Representations (excluding the 3 withdrawn representations) = 28.

Redcar and Cleveland Received Representations

Respondent	Do you support the application?	Summary of additional comments	Summary of Council's response
Cllr C Morgan	Yes	I support reluctantly because I don't see the benefit of this. Residents don't see the point of it and there is no information to help them.	Support Noted. The designation of a neighbourhood area will allow Nunthorpe Parish Council to proceed with the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. This will include further engagement with local residents to help shape the proposals. The Councils will provide information and support to the community through this process.
D Mendoza	Yes		Support noted.
R Wilkinson	Yes	Would be nice to know what powers will apply to the area & who will govern/be responsible	Support noted. The designation of the neighbourhood area will allow Nunthorpe Parish Council to proceed with the development of a Neighbourhood Plan. The measures that are to be included within the plan are yet to be determined but will be subject to

			<p>further consultation with residents in the area, in line with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.</p> <p>Once adopted, the neighbourhood plan will form part of the Development Plan for the area and will be used in determining relevant planning applications.</p>
<p>G Cox</p> <p>Parochial Church Council of St Marys Church Nunthorpe</p>	Yes	<p>While we have no comment regarding the principals of the proposal, only that we fully endorse it, we would ask if any consideration was given to the boundaries of our Parish, which is also a public designation of Nunthorpe. We were not able to overlay the two maps easily as there was insufficient clarity on the detail of the proposed area. However, looking at the maps enclosed with the papers this does not appear to be the case, as it is very clear that farmland to the east of the Nunthorpe bypass has not been included in the proposed designated area, but it is clearly within the Church Boundary. There could be other areas where the two do not correlate.</p> <p>I attach below a copy of our boundary map and would ask that, if it is not too late in the process, that the boundary for the Church Parish be included within the proposal for the Designated Area.</p> <p>Having made the above comments, we do however appreciate that this request should not stop what is in principle a very</p>	<p>Support noted.</p> <p>The request to consider expanding the boundary of the area to reflect the boundary of the church parish has been investigated and found not to be possible as this would incorporate land within the area of Guisborough Town Council in Redcar and Cleveland and land already forming part of Marton West Neighbourhood Area in Middlesbrough.</p> <p>Neighbourhood planning regulations prevent the overlapping of neighbourhood areas or the inclusion of areas</p>

		good intention. Only if time and the process permits would we ask that this suggestion is considered.	covered by a different parish council without their cooperation.
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Received Representations: 4

Supports: 4

Objections: 0

No comments 0

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Equality Impact Assessment

Subject of assessment:	Nunthorpe Neighbourhood Area Application			
Coverage:	Nunthorpe Ward Boundary			
This is a decision relating to:	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy	<input type="checkbox"/> Service	<input type="checkbox"/> Function
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Process/procedure	<input type="checkbox"/> Programme	<input type="checkbox"/> Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Review
	<input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)		
It is a:	New approach:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Revision of an existing approach:	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is driven by:	Legislation:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Local or corporate requirements:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Description:	<p>Key aims, objectives and activities To enable town councils, parish councils and designated neighbourhood forums to prepare Neighbourhood Plans, that puts in place a vision and general planning polices for the development, and use of land in their designated neighbourhood area.</p> <p>Statutory drivers Neighbourhood Planning forms part of the statutory process under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).</p> <p>Differences from any previous approach This is to determine a Neighbourhood Area application, submitted by Nunthorpe Parish Council, in accordance with the above Regulations.</p> <p>Key stakeholders and intended beneficiaries (internal and external as appropriate) The key stakeholders are local communities.</p> <p>Intended outcomes. To allow local communities to shape new development and improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of their neighbourhood.</p>			
Live date:	Upon determination date.			
Lifespan:	N/A			
Date of next review:	N/A			

Screening questions	Response			Evidence
	No	Yes	Uncertain	
Human Rights Could the decision impact negatively on individual Human Rights as enshrined in UK legislation? *	☒	☐	☐	The recommendations set-out in the attached Council report accord with procedural guidelines of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, to assist Local Authorities in the adoption of Neighbourhood Plans, submitted by and in consultation with local communities, and therefore will not have any implications on human rights.
Equality Could the decision result in adverse differential impacts on groups or individuals with characteristics protected in UK equality law? Could the decision impact differently on other commonly disadvantaged groups? *	☒	☐	☐	The recommendations set-out in the attached Executive report accord with procedural guidelines of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, to assist Local Authorities in the adoption of Neighbourhood Plans, submitted by and in consultation with local communities, and therefore will not have any implications on equality.
Community cohesion Could the decision impact negatively on relationships between different groups, communities of interest or neighbourhoods within the town? *	☒	☐	☐	The recommendations set-out in the attached Executive report accord with procedural guidelines of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, to assist Local Authorities in the adoption of Neighbourhood Plans, submitted by and in consultation with local communities, and therefore will not have any implications on community cohesion.
Next steps: ➡ If the answer to all of the above screening questions is No then the process is completed. ➡ If the answer of any of the questions is Yes or Uncertain, then a Level 2 Full Impact Assessment must be completed.				

Assessment completed by:	Charlton Gibben	Head of Service:	Paul Clarke
Date:	12/07/2022	Date:	12/07/2022

* Consult the Impact Assessment further guidance appendix for details on the issues covered by each of these broad questions prior to completion.

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<p>MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL</p>	
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<p>Report of:</p>	<p>Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Children’s Services Director of Children’s Services</p>
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<p>Submitted to:</p>	<p>Executive</p>
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<p>Date:</p>	<p>6 September 2022</p>
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<p>Title:</p>	<p>Final Report of the Children and Young People’s Learning Scrutiny Panel - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) - Service Response</p>
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<p>Report for:</p>	<p>Decision</p>
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<p>Status:</p>	<p>Public</p>
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<p>Strategic priority:</p>	<p>Children and young people</p>
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<p>Key decision:</p>	<p>No</p>
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<p>Why:</p>	<p>Decision does not reach the threshold to be a key decision</p>
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<p>Urgent:</p>	<p>No</p>
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<p>Why:</p>	<p>N/A</p>
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Executive summary

This report gives an overview of the investigation by the Children and Young People’s Learning to examine Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities (SEND). The purpose of the review was to examine provision for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in the local area and explore the different approaches taken to improve outcomes for those with SEND.

It is recommended that the Executive notes the content of the scrutiny panel’s final report on Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities (Appendix 1) and approves the action plan (Appendix 2) developed in response to the scrutiny panel’s recommendations.

Purpose

1. To seek the Executive's approval of the final report of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities (Appendix 1) and the resulting action plan (Appendix 2).

Background and relevant information

2. The Children and Families Act and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice (2014, updated 2015) pushed forward the Government's commitment to improve services for vulnerable children and young people and support strong families.
3. The Children and Families Act transformed the system for disabled children and young people and those with Special Educational Needs (SEN), so that services consistently support the best outcomes for them. The reforms created a system from birth to 25 through the development of coordinated assessment and single Education, Health and Care Plans; improving cooperation between all services responsible for providing education, health or social care; and giving parents and young people greater choice and control over their support.
4. The principles of the SEND Code of Practice work to ensure that SEND provision has regard to the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person and their parents. The code also highlights the importance of the child or young person participating as fully as possible in decisions, and the need to support the child or young person and their parents to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes.
5. In March 2017, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Middlesbrough to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the disability and special educational needs reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. The inspection raised significant concerns about the effectiveness of the local area. The local area was required to produce and submit a Written Statement of Action (WSOA)
6. A joint local area SEND revisit took place between 8 and 10 July 2019. Ofsted and the CQC revisited Middlesbrough to decide whether the local area had made sufficient progress in addressing the areas of significant weakness detailed in the WSoA issued on 19 May 2017. Inspectors were of the opinion that the local area had made significant and sustained progress to improve each of the serious weaknesses identified at the initial inspection and recommended that the formal monitoring visits from Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England should cease.
7. In continuing the oversight of these improvement Scrutiny reviewed the topic this year with terms of reference as follows.
 - a) To examine key data in respect of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Middlesbrough.
 - b) To identify:
 - the range of special educational needs and disabilities that children and young people may experience; and
 - the impact of special educational needs and disabilities on the ability of children and young people to learn and achieve alongside their peers.

- c) To examine how the Local Authority works with early years providers, schools and colleges to identify and support all the children and young people in Middlesbrough who have or may have special educational needs and disabilities.
 - d) To investigate how Education, Social Care and Health work collectively to deliver SEND provision at a local level.
 - e) To examine how the views, wishes and feelings of the child/young person and their parents are gained and how the child/young person is encouraged to participate as fully as possible in decisions.
 - f) To identify best practice strategies in supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
8. In line with the terms of reference the Scrutiny Panel gathered a range of evidence in relation to the Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities.
9. The following representatives from a range of Council Services and partner organisations attended scrutiny to discuss their involvement meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND.
- a) Inclusion and Specialist Support Services
 - b) Achievement Service
 - c) Access to Education
 - d) Children's Social Care
 - e) Health
 - f) Early Years
 - g) Schools
 - h) Post 16
 - i) Parents 4 Change

CONCLUSIONS

10. Based on the evidence provided throughout the investigation, the Panel's conclusions are as follows:-

Key data

- a) In 2021, the number of pupils attending school and/or settings in Middlesbrough who had an EHCP, was slightly lower than the north east rate but in line with the national rate. A total of 3,459 pupils in Middlesbrough schools were in receipt of SEN Support (13.8% of the overall school population), which was higher than both the north east rate (12.9%) and national rate (12.2%). The gap between non-

SEND and SEND pupils, achieving a good level of development at the end of early years, continues to close. This was a 5% improvement compared to the national average. Other areas of significant improvement and where local scores outperform national scores are KS2 Reading and Mathematics - where there is a 10% improvement; KS4 English and Mathematics Level 4 and 5 where there is also a 10% difference of closing the gap compared to national rates.

Impact of SEND

- b) As identified in the SEND Code of Practice, four broad areas give an overview of the range of special educational needs and disabilities that children and young people may experience, these include Cognition and Learning; Communication and Interaction; Physical, Medical and Sensory and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH). SEND can affect a child or young person's ability to learn, their behaviour or ability to socialise, reading and writing, ability to understand things, concentration levels and physical ability. Some learning difficulties and disabilities occur across the range of cognitive ability and, left unaddressed may lead to frustration, which may manifest itself as disaffection, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Working with early years providers, schools and colleges

- c) The settings consulted throughout the review (i.e. Rosedene Nursery Easterside. Ayresome Primary School, Caldicotes Primary Academy, Discovery Primary Academy, Green Lane Primary Academy and Middlesbrough College) clearly demonstrate that by effectively working in partnership with the Local Authority, partners and families; holistic and joined-up packages of support can be delivered to meet the care and health needs of children and young people with SEND. The settings clearly demonstrate inclusivity and the Local Authority provides a clear offer of support to enable settings to build their capacity and deliver support effectively. It is highly important that all of Middlesbrough's settings are aware of the explicit targeted inclusion support offered by the Local Authority via the Early Years and Primary Support Service (EYPSS) and the Inclusion, Assessment and Review Service and Model to identify needs, put in place support and review support plans.
- d) Although evidence suggests that needs are identified early, accurately and consistently and that effective transition planning processes are in place, restrictions associated with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) can sometimes lead to some pupils missing out on provision or experiencing unnecessary delays - this needs to be addressed. In addition, to further support positive destinations in adult life for young people with SEND, the Local Authority should link up with Middlesbrough College to provide placements for the college's supported internships programme.
- e) As a local area, a SEND review has been undertaken of all Middlesbrough's settings, i.e. for early years, primary, secondary and post-16. The purpose of the review was to identify strengths and areas of development. Outcomes of the review have been reported to the settings and actions are being undertaken to further develop/enhance support/training for members of staff. To support continuous improvement, it is important that a regular cycle of self-evaluation, across all partners, takes place.

Delivering SEND provision at a local level

- f) There is a great sense of joint responsibility and the partnership between Education, Social Care and Health has strengthened significantly over recent years. The local area has made good progress in addressing areas of significant weakness detailed in the written statement of action (WSOA) issued on 19 May 2017 and has made great strides in improving core processes and building a consistent understanding for identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of children and young people who have SEND. The local area's SEND Strategic Group, which reports to the Children's Trust, provides an effective governance structure to ensure strategic decisions can be taken swiftly and effectively. Through the work of the SEND Strategic Group, the local area continues to move forward with key developments to ensure that the needs of children and young people with SEND 0-25 in Middlesbrough are being met. The local area delivers better, joined-up support by planning pathways of support for specific types of needs. There is a stronger partnership-wide commitment to jointly commissioning services in a way which is responsive to children and young people's needs. For example, the local area developed an evidence-informed and collaborative approach to improve support for children and young people with autism by building capacity to educate children with autism within secondary settings and developing a new improved neurodevelopmental diagnostic pathway.
- g) It is evident that provision, opportunities and outcomes for children and young people with SEND continue to improve across the local area. Improved data sharing has been introduced, which has led to a robust data sharing agreement between the provider trusts and the Local Authority. The agreement allows the long-term sharing of data and information, in respect of needs, at a child-level. Gathering and triangulating data, intelligence and feedback and using this to inform discussions with partners and stakeholders as well as individual young people and families, about the shape of local support and services, is highly important. It would be beneficial for a SEND annual report to be produced that demonstrates how data, intelligence and feedback has been used to support strategic planning arrangements and ensure that there is sufficient local provision and support.

Involvement of the child/young person and their parents

- h) The local area recognises the importance of working in a co-productive way and demonstrates commitment to sharing challenges and solving problems. Local groups of parents and carers, such as Parents4Change, have been empowered to play a strategic role within the local SEND system and have contributed strongly to improving services and support for children and young people with SEND. Middlesbrough's families are fully involved in sharing their views, supporting developments and reshaping services. For example, there has been significant improvement in Education, Health and Care (EHC) assessment and planning. In addition, Summary Assessment Meetings (SAMs), which have been specifically introduced by the local area to enhance coproduction, are highly valued by families because they feel that their views and experiences are heard, understood and acted upon by local area leaders. Feedback on the EHCP assessment process has showed consistent 90% satisfaction rates from families and Middlesbrough has a very low tribunal rate, one of the lowest in the country. These

rates demonstrate effective partnership working with families to achieve coproduced EHCPs and placement outcomes.

- i) Currently, a primary concern for parents/carers is transport, due to a shortage of drivers. Although school transport is being provided by the Local Authority to enable children to access education, arranging transport to access respite care is proving difficult. It is highly important that this issue is resolved as a matter of urgency.

Managing future demand

- j) Overall, it is clear that the challenges of the pandemic for local areas and for individuals have undoubtedly been great. Yet the negative experiences that many children and young people with SEND and their families have had during this time are not new - rather, they have been highlighted and intensified.¹ The importance of the availability of good universal services to all children and young people with SEND across education, health and social care cannot be underestimated. Given the increasing demands, the local area continues to work together to ensure that the needs of Middlesbrough's children and young people are met and continues to develop its services in partnership with families to meet needs and improve outcomes. There is a need for the local area to continue driving further improvement in the SEND system and supporting children and young people at this critical moment.
- k) The local area has gone above and beyond to support children and young people with SEND and their families during this challenging time. The case studies shared throughout the review clearly demonstrate this. However, as the damaging effects of the pandemic on children and young people with SEND become clear, so too does the need to ensure that all partners are playing their role in supporting them. It is important that the Local Authority continues to invest time in fostering relationships and partnerships, given their importance to the local SEND system and the risk that those relationships could change very quickly. Given the increasing demand for provision to support those children and young people with SEND, it is vital that work continues to expand specialist provision and enable mainstream settings to provide support. It would also be beneficial to report on data/intelligence that demonstrates the specific strategic approaches or practices that have been effective in supporting children and young people with SEND, enabling them to achieve the best possible educational outcomes and preparing them effectively for adulthood.

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation, and the conclusions above, the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel makes the following recommendations.

- a) That awareness raising activities are undertaken to ensure that all of Middlesbrough's schools and settings are aware of the Local Authority's explicit offer of targeted inclusion support. There is a need for schools and settings to receive clear and concise information on what targeted support can be accessed, what is part of the "core" offer open to all schools and settings (without requiring a statutory assessment

and plan), and the additional offer that settings and schools can tap into by using their own resources.

- b)** That work is undertaken with Legal Services and the Data Protection Officer to develop an effective transition planning process for all stages of education, which addresses the restrictions associated with GDPR. For example, Durham County Council has developed an electronic process for primary school headteachers to share the names of students who may require additional transition support into secondary education. Wording, informing parents that information will be shared to support transition, has been included in the admissions brochure, on Durham County Council's website and in secondary application forms and offer letters.
- c)** That the Local Authority links up with Middlesbrough College to provide placements for the college's supported internships programme. Supported internships have been introduced at Middlesbrough College to give a greater focus on preparing young people with special educational needs and disabilities with the skills needed for adulthood and employment.
- d)** That, to support continuous improvement, a regular cycle of SEND reviews takes place across all educational settings and outcomes are reported to the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel.
- e)** That SEND annual reports are published to demonstrate how data, intelligence and feedback has been used to support strategic planning arrangements and ensure that there is sufficient local provision and support.
- f)** That work is undertaken with the Integrated Transport Service to explore and identify solutions to ensure children and young people with SEND are provided with travel assistance to enable them to access respite care.
- g)** That, to further promote effective partnership working, a local area partnership agreement is developed, which outlines how partners will work together and sets out responsibilities and agreed working arrangements. Investing time in fostering relationships and partnerships, given their importance to the local SEND system, is highly important - as there is a risk that those relationships can change very quickly.
- h)** That the collaborative work undertaken by Education, Social Care and Health is commended and continues to drive further improvement in the SEND system. Given the increasing demand for provision to support those children and young people with SEND, it is vital that work continues to expand specialist provision and enable mainstream settings to provide support.
- i)** That data/intelligence is collected, analysed and reported on to demonstrate the specific strategic approaches and practices that have been effective in supporting children and young people with SEND, enabling them to achieve the best possible educational outcomes and preparing them effectively for adulthood.
- j)** That regular updates are reported to the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, on a six monthly basis, in respect of the progress made with implementing the above recommendations and the work undertaken to develop and sustain an effective local SEND system.

What decision(s) are being recommended?

- a. That the content of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel's final report on Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities (Appendix 1), be noted.
- b. That the action plan (Appendix 2), developed in response to the scrutiny panel's recommendations, be approved.

Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

12. By approving the attached action plan (Appendix 2) the Executive is supporting the ongoing developments to ensure that the needs of children and young people with SEND are met across Education, Health and Social Care as identified by the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel.

Other potential decision(s) and why these have not been recommended

13. The Executive could decide not to approve the action plan (Appendix 2) but this would miss a valuable opportunity to contribute to the ongoing developments to support children and young people with SEND.

Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Legal

14. There is no legal impact to be considered

Strategic priorities and risks

This report relates to the strategic priority CYP 03: Evidence that Middlesbrough Council listens to children's voices

Human Rights, Equality and Data Protection

15. Impact assessment is not required, no changes to existing policies

Financial

16. No financial impact currently in report.

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Please see accompanying action plan.	The Director of Education and Partnerships has the overall responsibility for this plan.	Please see accompanying action plan

Appendices

1	Final Report of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel: Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities
2	Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel: Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities Action plan

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MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Final Report Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

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THE AIM OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW

1. The purpose of the review was to examine provision for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in the local area and explore the different approaches taken to improve outcomes for those with SEND.
2. The review aims to assist the Local Authority in achieving its strategic priority:
 - ***Children and Young People*** - *We will show Middlesbrough's children that they matter and work to make our town safe and welcoming and to improve outcomes for all children and young people.*

TERMS OF REFERENCE

3. The terms of reference, for the scrutiny panel's review, are as follows:
 - a) To examine key data in respect of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Middlesbrough.
 - b) To identify:
 - the range of special educational needs and disabilities that children and young people may experience; and
 - the impact of special educational needs and disabilities on the ability of children and young people to learn and achieve alongside their peers.
 - c) To examine how the Local Authority works with early years providers, schools and colleges to identify and support all the children and young people in Middlesbrough who have or may have special educational needs and disabilities.
 - d) To investigate how Education, Social Care and Health work collectively to deliver SEND provision at a local level.
 - e) To examine how the views, wishes and feelings of the child/young person and their parents are gained and how the child/young person is encouraged to participate as fully as possible in decisions.
 - f) To identify best practice strategies in supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. The Children and Families Act and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice (2014, updated 2015) pushed forward the Government's commitment to improve services for vulnerable children and young people and support strong families.
5. The Children and Families Act transformed the system for disabled children and young people and those with Special Educational Needs (SEN), so that services consistently support the best outcomes for them. The reforms created a system from birth to 25 through the development of coordinated assessment and single Education, Health and Care Plans; improving cooperation between all services responsible for providing education, health or social care; and giving parents and young people greater choice and control over their support.

6. The principles of the SEND Code of Practice work to ensure that SEND provision has regard to the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person and their parents. The code also highlights the importance of the child or young person participating as fully as possible in decisions, and the need to support the child or young person and their parents to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes.
7. In March 2017, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Middlesbrough to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the disability and special educational needs reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.
8. The inspection raised significant concerns about the effectiveness of the local area. The local area was required to produce and submit a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) to Ofsted that explained how the local area planned to tackle areas of significant weakness in the following areas:
 1. There were fundamental weaknesses in the strategic leadership, governance and implementation of the disability and special educational needs reforms in the local area.
 2. Children, young people and families had too little involvement in discussion and decision-making about the services and support they needed. The local offer was poor and, as a result, children, young people and families had a weak understanding of the resources and support available in Middlesbrough.
 3. Leaders had an inaccurate view of the local area's effectiveness. They did not gather, analyse and use information and data to drive improvement in provision and outcomes for children and young people who had special educational needs and/or disabilities in the local area.
 4. Strategic planning was weak and there was no strategy for jointly commissioning services across education, health and social care.
9. A joint local area SEND revisit took place between 8 and 10 July 2019. Ofsted and the CQC revisited Middlesbrough to decide whether the local area had made sufficient progress in addressing the areas of significant weakness detailed in the WSOA issued on 19 May 2017.
10. Inspectors were of the opinion that the local area had made significant and sustained progress to improve each of the serious weaknesses identified at the initial inspection and recommended that the formal monitoring visits from Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England should cease.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

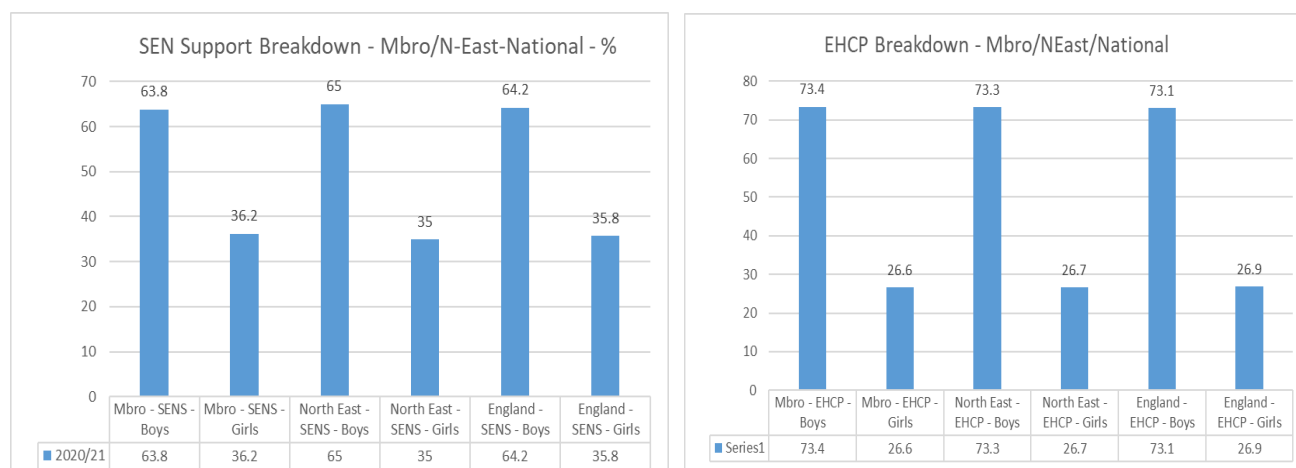
Term of Reference A - To examine key data in respect of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Middlesbrough

11. As reported in **2021**, 3.7% of pupils attending school and/or settings in Middlesbrough have an EHCP, that equates to 1300 children and young people, which is slightly lower than the north east rate of 3.8% but in line with the national rate of 3.7%
12. A total of 3,459 pupils in Middlesbrough schools are in receipt of SEN Support, which accounts for 13.8% of the overall school population and is higher than both the north east rate (12.9%) and national rate (12.2%).
13. Nationally, there are approximately 431,000 children and young people across the whole 0-25 age range with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Within Middlesbrough, there are approx. 4800 children and young people classed as SEND, of this figure, approximately

1300 have an EHCP and 3500 do not require an EHCP. The Local Authority's Inclusion, Assessment and Review Service and Model provides targeted inclusion support, which has impacted on the number of children and young people requiring an EHCP.

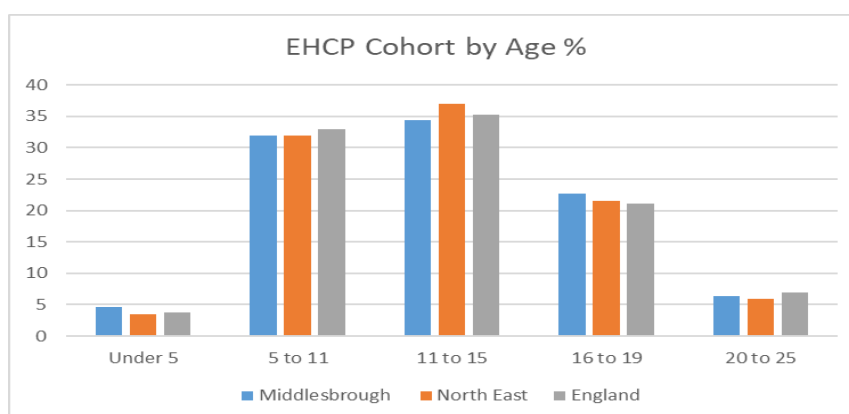
14. Further analysis of the individual characteristics of the children and young people with an EHCP and those in the SEN Support cohort shows that:

Gender



15. In Middlesbrough, the SEN Support cohort is split into 63.8% male and 36.2% female. The EHCP cohort split is 73.4% male and 26.6% female. These levels are comparable to national and regional data.

Age



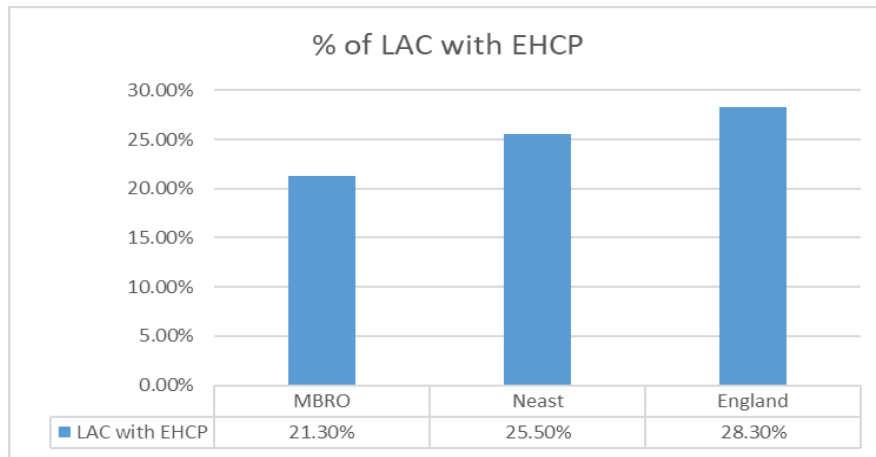
16. The majority of children with an EHCP are of primary and secondary age in Middlesbrough. Middlesbrough is broadly comparable to regional and national levels for the ages of children and young people with an EHCP.

Ethnicity

17. The majority of children with an EHCP in Middlesbrough are White, in particular White British (73.5%), this is broadly comparable to national but slightly less than regional levels. 7.8% of children and young people with an EHCP are Asian Pakistani, this is higher than national and regional levels. Just over 1% are Black African, which is comparable to regional but less

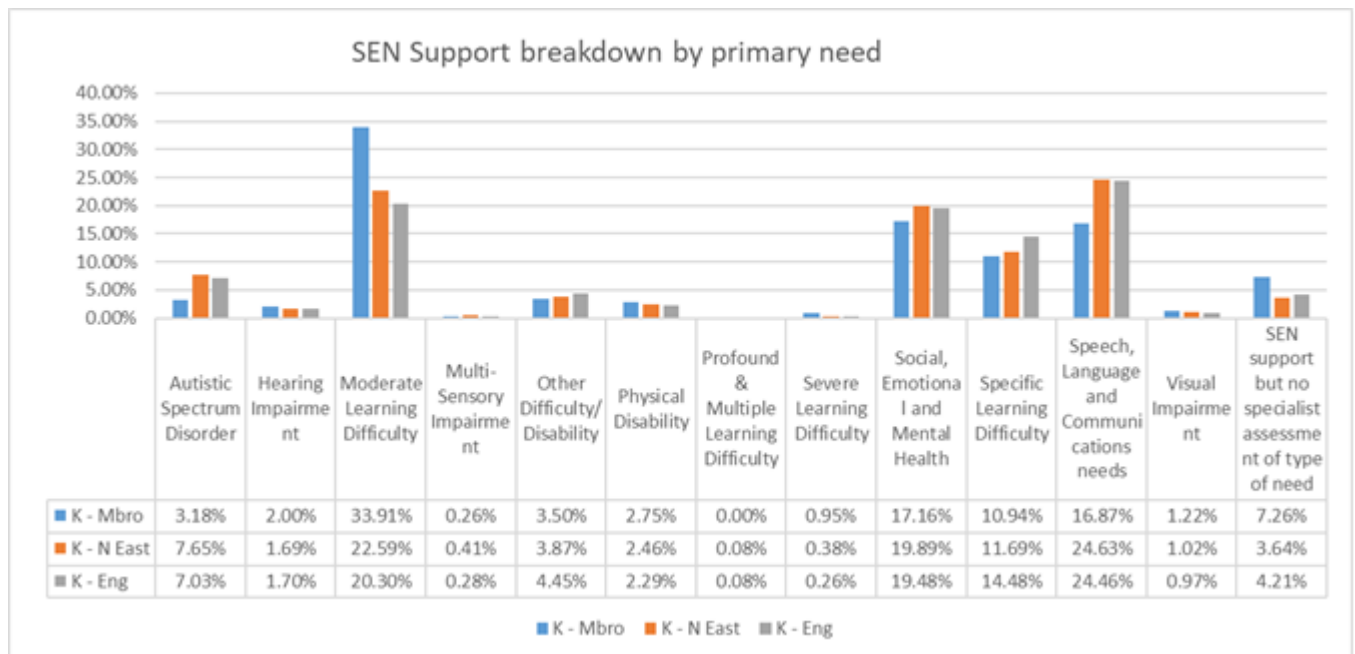
than national levels. All other ethnicities (including those of mixed heritage) account for less than 1% each of the EHCP population; when totalled this accounts for 14.5% of children with an EHCP.

Looked After Children (LAC)



18. At present, 21% of children in Middlesbrough who are looked after by the Local Authority have an EHCP. This is lower than regional and national levels.

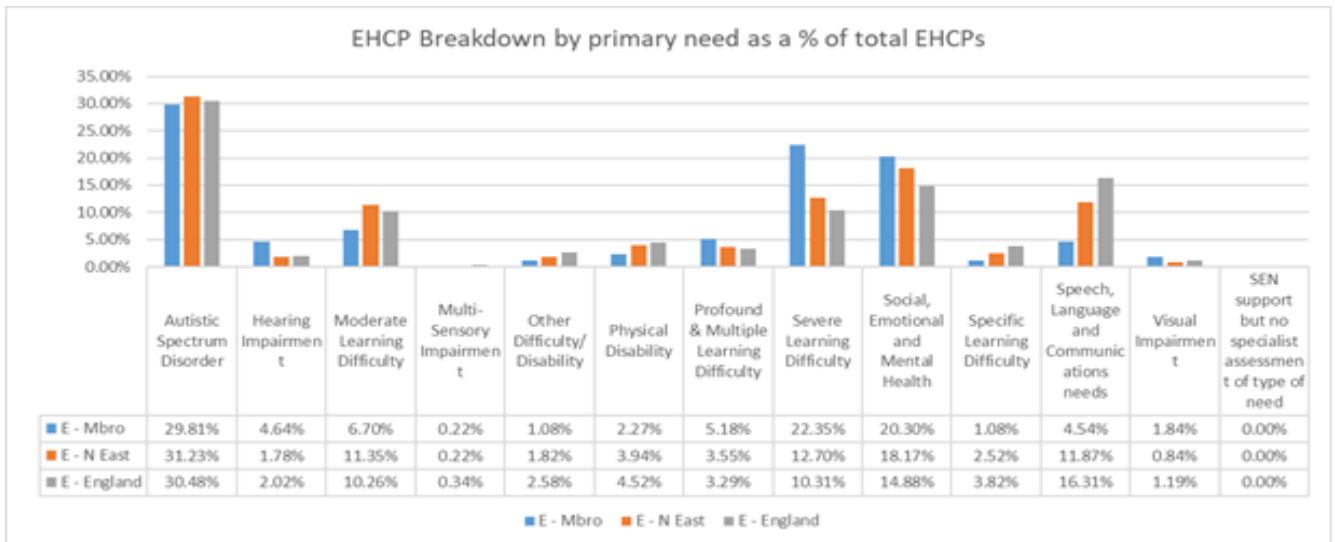
Primary Needs



19. The primary needs breakdown for children and young people in the SEN Support cohort, in Middlesbrough, shows that:

- there are less children with autism than regional and national levels;

- there are more children with a moderate learning difficulty than regional and national levels;
- there are slightly less children with social and emotional needs, specific learning difficulties and speech and language needs in Middlesbrough than regional and national levels; and
- Middlesbrough is broadly comparable to regional and national levels for children and young people with a hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical disability, profound and multiple difficulty and other difficulty/disability.



20. The primary needs breakdown for children and young people with an EHCP shows that:

- there are more children with a hearing impairment, severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and social and emotional difficulties compared to regional and national levels;
- there are fewer children with moderate learning difficulties, speech language and communication needs and specific learning difficulties compared to regional and national levels; and
- the levels of children and young people with Autism with an EHCP is broadly comparable to regional and national levels.

21. The gap between non-SEND and SEND pupils, achieving a good level of development at the end of early years, continues to close. This is a 5% improvement compared to the national average. Other areas of significant improvement and where local scores outperform national scores are KS2 Reading and Mathematics - where there is a 10% improvement; KS4 English and Mathematics Level 4 and 5 where there is also a 10% difference of closing the gap, compared to national rates.

22. Further information and key data can be found in the minutes and associated documentation for the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, which was held on 4 October 2021.

Term of Reference B - To identify:

- **the range of special educational needs and disabilities that children and young people may experience; and**
- **the impact of special educational needs and disabilities on the ability of children and young people to learn and achieve alongside their peers.**

23. In respect of the SEND Code of Practice, there are four main areas of need within the code:

- Cognition and Learning
- Communication and Interaction
- Physical, Medical and Sensory
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)

Cognition and Learning

24. In terms of cognition and learning, essentially thinking and reasoning, there is a huge spectrum of needs:

- A small number of children may have profound and multiple learning difficulties, affecting all aspects of their development and functioning.
- Some will have severe learning difficulties, while others will have mild to moderate learning difficulties.
- Those attending special schools, with severe learning difficulties, will be likely to have very significant needs in terms of thinking and reasoning, have difficulties with mobility and require support in respect of personal care.
- Those with moderate to mild needs are more likely to be educated in mainstream schools with a significant amount of additional support.
- Beyond severe, moderate and mild learning difficulties there is a further group that has specific learning difficulties with literacy (dyslexia, which is the most common developmental difficulty, affecting 10% of people and ranging from mild to severe), numeracy (dyscalculia) or motor planning (dyspraxia).

25. In terms of the impact on functioning development and learning, the child or young person may:

- become acutely aware of his/her areas of difficulty and may then become fearful of learning tasks and lose confidence in their own abilities;
- require support to access work and may develop work avoidance strategies;
- mask difficulties, sometimes through inappropriate/challenging behaviour and questions; and
- reach adulthood without having acquired the basic levels of literacy and numeracy (and in some cases social skills and confidence and/or personal independence) that they need in order to be able to manage in adult life.

26. If dyslexic, a child may be able to answer questions and express good ideas orally, but be unable to record the information. The child may also dislike reading, partly because the content of books may not be age appropriate.

Communication and Interaction

27. In terms of communication and interaction needs, children and young people have difficulties with speech production; with expressing their needs, wishes and opinions and with understanding language that they hear. There is a wide spectrum of need, some will be

preverbal, while others will have needs that are much less obvious. Some children and young people have social communication and social interaction needs. Such needs are very typical of those diagnosed with autistic spectrum conditions.

28. With communication and interaction needs, a child or young person may:

- have encountered difficulties with speech sound production that makes their speech difficult to understand, causing them frustration;
- have given up trying to make themselves understood;
- struggle to make and maintain friendships, which can have an adverse impact on their social development and confidence at school; and
- have speech immaturities that impact upon the acquisition of literacy skills.

29. In instances where children have receptive language difficulties but can read fluently, it can be assumed that they have a higher level of understanding of text than is actually the case. The child or young person may not understand longer and more complex words used in the classroom, causing stress and frustration and resulting in a struggle with listening and attention. This may lead others to perceive that they are misbehaving. The child may also struggle to acquire key vocabulary needed for learning (e.g. language relating to range of simple concepts such as time, size, shape, position).

Physical, Medical and Sensory

30. In terms of physical, medical and sensory needs, children with medical conditions, physical disabilities and sensory impairments form a particularly diverse group with highly individual needs. In general terms, a condition or disability can make it difficult or impossible for a child or young person to make use of the educational facilities normally provided.

31. A child with mobility difficulties will more than likely require adjustments to the curriculum and significant adaptations to the physical environment. Mobility difficulties can also result in a child requiring support for personal care and/or daily routines and learning activities.

32. In terms of the impact on the individual, mobility difficulties can lead to issues with self-image and self-esteem, particularly if the child or young person has a chronic or degenerative condition, or has suffered a life-changing accident.

33. Children with physical, medical and sensory needs can experience periods of absence from education, due to being unwell or taking time off school to attend medical appointments and receive treatment.

Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH)

34. In terms of Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH), very often the behaviour can be rooted in early trauma, difficulties in forming a secure attachment with an adult when young, loss/bereavement of a loved one or an undiagnosed neurodevelopmental disorder, such as an autistic spectrum condition. In addition, the child or young person can have unidentified learning needs or speech and language needs. Anxiety and depression are increasingly prevalent in children and young people with SEMH, with Covid-19 undoubtedly having an impact.

35. In terms of SEMH, there is an increased risk of the child or young person being excluded from school and losing valuable learning time, which will be likely to have an impact on their progress and possibly their life chances. The child or young person can require targeted

teaching in a dedicated space, away from other pupils, in order to access learning. Being taught away from other pupils, is likely to have an impact on the range of activities the child or young person can access and will reduce interaction with peers. Their social skills and confidence can be adversely impacted. Some children can appear loud, confident and challenging, however, inside they can be very distressed, anxious and hurting. Children tend to either act out their frustrations or internalise them. For those who internalise their feelings, those children may engage in self-harming, become involved in risk taking behaviour placing them and others in danger or develop anxiety based school avoidance (EBSA).

36. SEMH needs are very complex and very much interwoven with the other needs referenced.

37. *Further information to evidence the range and impact of needs and disabilities can be found in the minutes and associated documentation for the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, which was held on 6 September 2021.*

Term of Reference C - To examine how the Local Authority works with early years providers, schools and colleges to identify and support all the children and young people in Middlesbrough who have or may have special educational needs and disabilities.

38. Local authorities must carry out their functions with a view to identifying all the children and young people in their area who have or may have SEND.

39. When carrying out their statutory duties under the Children and Families Act 2014, local authorities must do so with a view to making sure that services work together where this promotes children and young people's wellbeing or improves the quality of special educational provision (Section 25 of the Children and Families Act 2014).

Early Years Settings

40. Early years providers must have arrangements in place to support children with SEN or disabilities. These arrangements should include a clear approach to identifying and responding to SEN. The benefits of early identification are widely recognised - identifying need at the earliest point, and then making effective provision, improves long-term outcomes for children.

Early Years and Primary Support Service (EYPSS)

41. To improve provision for children with SEND, the Local Authority has developed an outreach model. The model involves the Early Years and Primary Support Service (EYPSS) visiting early years settings to develop the skills and knowledge of staff members, ensuring more children are able to access mainstream provision. As a result of this work, there has been a significant increase in the number of children with SEND accessing mainstream provision and a reduction in those needing to access the local area's specialist provision at the Cleveland Unit.

42. The EYPSS works with children from birth until 11 years old. The service is delivered by the Local Authority, however, a multi-agency approach has been adopted. Most importantly, the child and their family are involved/consulted, in addition to health colleagues (e.g. health visitors, speech and language therapists, consultant paediatricians and GPs etc.) and early years settings/schools. The aim of the service is to identify needs at the earliest opportunity, provide early assessment, deliver interventions to promote the best outcomes for each child and their family, support inclusion in a mainstream setting of parents' choice (where possible) and identify the most appropriate setting if an alternative is necessary.

43. All the work of the EYPSS is based around the model - Assess, Plan, Do, Review. Initially, parents/carers/families are consulted to identify the needs of the child and determine the support that is required. Prior to the child attending an educational setting, work is undertaken to upskill parents/carers to enable them support learning and development.
44. Initially, an assessment is undertaken of the child's needs, following that, parents/carers and the child are invited to multi-disciplinary family groups. These groups provide assessment, information, advice and guidance to support and upskill parents/carers. The group takes a Portage approach, which is a model of support for children and families that can be adapted and used effectively both in the home and in early years settings. The purpose of the approach is to build on identified strengths to support needs. The approach also places great importance on support for parents and carers. If parents feel unable to attend a group session, the approach is adapted and home visits are undertaken.
45. Once parents/carers have identified their preferred early years setting, the EYPSS works in partnership with parents/carers, the early years setting and other professionals to ensure a smooth transition into and out of the nursery provision.
46. In terms of the pathway, the main professionals that are involved with the EYPSS are health professionals, health visitors and early years settings. Referrals to Portage can be made for children prior to them attending an early years setting, by any professional or practitioner working with a pre-school child who has significant concern about their learning or development.
47. In some instances, an early years setting will make the referral. A referral from a setting can be a result of a child moving into the area at a later stage in their lives or their needs may not present at an early age, e.g. children with communication difficulties or on the autistic spectrum.
48. Once a referral has been received, a multi-disciplinary assessment will be undertaken, with key professionals involved with the child. Once the assessment has been undertaken, children and their families will become involved in intervention groups, based on the Portage model. The child is then provided with support to transition to the early years setting. Once the child is attending a setting, ongoing support and monitoring is provided. The EYPSS provides settings with training, teaching strategies, loans of specialist equipment and resources, additional funding etc. The support offered is continuously revisited and reviewed with parents/carers and the setting.

Green Lane Primary Academy

49. Green Lane Primary Academy is a large mainstream primary school and approximately 6.5% of the pupil population are registered as having SEND.
50. To support children with SEND, nursery staff at Green Lane Primary Academy have:
 - completed training on manual handling and peg feeding;
 - worked alongside physiotherapists and occupational therapists; and
 - gained advice on feeding from a dietician.
51. A case study (*see minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel held on 8 November 2021*), shared by Green Lane Primary Academy, demonstrated that:

- the needs of children are identified in a timely manner, at the earliest of stages;
- agencies work together to plan a smooth transition into nursery and multi-disciplinary team meetings and physical visits to the setting take place;
- multi-disciplinary team meetings ensure a child's needs can be discussed and planned for holistically, with shared ownership;
- there is positive partnership working;
- training and modelling of strategies build the confidence of staff members;
- using Inclusion Development Funding can assist with meeting the needs of a child and the delivery of specialist interventions; and
- the quality and high level of inclusion would not be possible without the collaborative working and determination of the key professionals involved with each child.

52. In respect of the case study, the impact of effective partnership working had ensured the child is:

- settled and happy in school;
- making good progress;
- mixing with peers; and
- learning to communicate their needs.

53. The EYPSS has been an invaluable resource to Green Lane Primary Academy. The EYPSS has provided opportunities for the child to progress and enjoy the setting and has also provided staff members with confidence to care for the child and deliver effective support.

Caldicotes Primary Academy

54. Caldicotes Primary Academy is a mainstream primary school. There are 55 children within the early years setting and 10 of those children are currently on the SEND Register. The main areas of need, in the setting, are speech and language needs.

55. To support children with SEND, staff members at Caldicotes Primary Academy have individualised development plans, which empower them to deliver effective provision for children.

56. A case study (*see minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel held on 8 November 2021*), shared by Caldicotes Primary Academy, demonstrated that:

- the setting has experienced early years staff;
- effective partnership working is in place; and
- Inclusion Development Funding enables the delivery of effective interventions and strategies to support children.

57. In respect of the case study, the impact of effective partnership working had ensured:

- the child is settled, making excellent progress and is able to communicate choices/preferences and join in group times with peers;
- the child is now able to benefit from lessons that were once inaccessible;
- the child's SEND needs do not define the child or their educational journey; and
- the family is supported at home.

58. Working with EYPSS has strengthened practice and provided staff members with valuable skills that enable them to care and support other children with SEND.

Rosedene Easterside

59. Rosedene Easterside is a nursery, which is a Private, Voluntary & Independent (PVI) setting. There are currently 98 children on roll. 10 of those children have been placed on the SEND Register. All 10 children have been presenting with communication delay and some are on the autism pathway.

60. To support children with SEND, staff members at Rosedene Easterside have received training on modelling of strategies and have accessed distance learning courses on autism and communication training. In-house training has also been delivered by the setting's SEND Lead.

61. A case study (*see minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel held on 8 November 2021*), shared by Rosedene Easterside, demonstrated that:

- the setting establishes good relationships with families;
- the needs of children are identified early, enabling the setting to access support quickly from various services;
- Inclusion Development Funding enables the setting to provide extra support; and
- training the whole team has upskilled staff members.

62. In respect of the case study, the impact of effective partnership working had ensured:

- the child was referred and signposted to the appropriate professionals and agencies for assessment and support, including an EHCP assessment and autism assessment;
- the parent receives ongoing support and has been supported to consider, at an early point, the most appropriate support and provision for child in the future;
- the child is settled and happy in the setting;
- the child's attendance has improved; and
- the child is making progress, babbling and repeating some words.

63. *Further information to evidence partnership working between the Local Authority and early years settings can be found in the minutes and associated documentation for the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, which was held on 8 November 2021.*

Schools

64. Every school is required to identify and address the SEN of the pupils that they support.

Inclusion, Assessment and Review Service and Model

65. A new service and model that focuses on early intervention and support at the earliest of stages has been developed by the Local Authority to support schools. The model aims to increase the capacity and resources available to support early intervention work in schools, further develop the quality and range of alternative provision options and support early identification of need to ensure children and young people with SEND receive the support they require in a timely and coordinated way. Feedback from schools has been used to inform the model's development. A review of the model has been undertaken and work is

planned to further develop/enhance the model to provide outreach and inclusion support to settings.

Educational Psychology Service

66. Middlesbrough's Educational Psychology Service operates a consultation based service, whereby, when schools have an initial concern about a child, discussions are held to explore explanatory factors. Following the initial discussion, if SEND needs are identified, the process will be formalised and a consultation session will be held with parents, the school and other relevant agencies to discuss next steps and agree a way forward.

Discovery Primary Academy

67. Discovery Primary Academy is a special school for children with severe learning and associated complex needs.

68. In terms of accessing provision at Discovery Primary Academy and identifying needs, the following procedure is followed:

- The school receives a referral from the Local Authority:
 - once paperwork has been received, a high-level assessment of need will be undertaken;
 - conversations take place between the school and the Local Authority's SEND case officers to ensure delivery of the correct placement;
 - a series of observations and discussions with multi-agency professionals will take place; and
 - visits will be undertaken whereby school staff will visit the child in their home and the child and his/her parents will have the opportunity to visit the school setting.
- If it is determined that Discovery is best placed to meet the needs of the child, the child will be offered a place at the school. If the parents/carers decide to accept the place, then funding will be explored and agreed with the Local Authority's SEND case officers to ensure delivery of effective support to meet the needs of the child.
- In terms of transition, the school works with the Local Authority to ensure transport is arranged to enable the child to get to and from the setting. The school has a rapid transition procedure or a staggered approach. The rapid procedure provides access to the placement at the earliest stage and the staggered approach enables the child to adjust to the new setting gradually. The school works closely with the family to determine the best approach for a child.
- If a child's needs change, further assessments are commissioned. The school continues to liaise with other professionals and adapt provision accordingly, ensuring that the school and the Local Authority continue to be responsive to the child's needs.

69. At Discovery, the primary need of children is severe learning difficulties (and associated needs) and there is an increasing number of pupils on the autistic spectrum, the school therefore offers:

- high staffing ratios;
- a personalised learning approach;
- integrated therapies, delivered alongside the curriculum;
- outdoor play and learning;
- high expectations for all;
- a communication immersion environment;

- staff skilled in working with pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and associated needs;
- an environment that is responsive to need;
- high proportions of enrichment activities in and out of the academy;
- pastoral support for both pupils and parents;
- preparation for adulthood;
- three curriculum pathways: early years, informal and semi-formal;
- academic, social, emotional and life skills; and
- therapeutic support.

70. There is a constant dialogue between the school and the Local Authority to ensure the most appropriate agencies are involved with the child. Working with the Local Authority is extremely important in ensuring appropriate support is in place to enable children to achieve the best possible outcomes. In addition, constant dialogue and discussion ensures that appropriate training is delivered to staff members. Partnership work with the Local Authority has also enabled the school to develop its secondary provision and offer outreach support to other settings.

71. A case study (*see minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel held on 25 April 2022*), shared by Discovery Primary Academy, demonstrated that:

- effective partnership working is in place;
- relationships are established with families,
- planned transitions take place; and
- bespoke packages of support are delivered for individual children.

72. In respect of the case study, the impact of effective partnership working had ensured:

- the child is making progress in the setting and has settled in well;
- personalised support with a focus on therapies for social, emotional and academic needs ensure all of the child's needs are met;
- the family feel well supported and able to approach staff;
- continued close working between education and social care to deliver a holistic approach; and
- the child's attendance is improving.

73. Most importantly, partnership working enables person-centred planning to take place.

Ayresome Primary School

74. Ayresome Primary is a mainstream school. 25% of the school's pupils have SEND, with increasing levels of complexity.

75. In terms of identifying where a pupil may be having difficulty, which may be because of SEN:

- In school, admissions meetings are held for each child, observational assessments and teacher assessments are undertaken and discussions are held with parents.
- The school works closely with health visitors, speech and language therapists and the School Nursing Service to seek advice and share information.
- The school works closely with the Ethnic Minority Achievement Team (EMAT) to undertake assessments in home language and to liaise with parents to gain additional information.

- The school also works closely with the Local Authority's Admissions Team, its Portage Team, inclusion officers, educational psychologists, social workers and the Virtual School to seek advice and share information.

76. At Ayresome Primary, the support that the school provides to those students who have or may have SEND includes:

- personalised learning plans and provision;
- SEND support plans with targets that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely (SMART), so that progress can be monitored;
- reviews of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) so they remain relevant;
- small group interventions linked to learning;
- additional support through applications for High Needs Funding (HNF);
- additional adult support in school;
- access to in-school interventions, linked to physical development, including fine motor skills;
- access to in-school support linked to Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH);
- specific/bespoke staff Continuing Professional Development (CPD) linked to children's needs (delivered by the Local Authority);
- outreach support from specialised staff from the Local Authority;
- parental workshops;
- access to the Early Help Team through referrals;
- access to the Disability Social Work Team through referrals; and
- access to agencies such as SEND Information and Advice Support Services (SENDIASS), Daisy Chain, etc.

77. A case study (*see minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel held on 25 April 2022*), shared by Ayresome Primary School, demonstrated that:

- effective partnership working is in place;
- there is a constant exchange of information, enabling the school to access advice, guidance, support and interventions; and
- HNF can be accessed to provide additional staff and resources to meet the needs of children.

78. In respect of the case study, the impact of effective partnership working had ensured:

- that Alternative Provision is not required for the child;
- the child's time in school increased, as behaviour improved due to strategies put in place;
- the child is now attending school full-time and the school is able to meet the child's needs;
- staff members feel confident to deploy strategies and opportunities to re-set, if behaviour deteriorates;
- regular reviews are undertaken; and
- there is open communication with the Inclusion Officer.

79. *Further information to evidence partnership working between the Local Authority and schools can be found in the minutes and associated documentation for the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, which was held on 25 April 2022.*

Colleges

80. Colleges should be involved in transition planning between school and college so that they can prepare to meet the student's needs and ensure a successful transition into college life.

81. Where a student has a learning difficulty or disability that calls for special educational provision, the college must use its best endeavours to put appropriate support in place.

Middlesbrough College

82. There are currently 60 high needs students, at the college, who are studying a range of programmes within the Progression Studies Department. The department delivers programmes that develop life skills and work skills. The department also offers programmes to prepare students for vocational study in areas such as construction, engineering, health and care and digital technologies. There are also 110 high needs students who are studying curriculum courses at the college. In total, 85 high needs students live in Middlesbrough Local Authority area.

83. In terms of identifying where a pupil may be having difficulty, which may be because of SEN, there are many ways in which a student can inform the college that they have additional needs.

84. The Additional Learning Support (ALS) Team provides opportunities for disclosure at the application stage, departmental interview, enrolment and throughout the course. If a student declares an additional need, they will be invited to a short interview to determine how the ALS Team can best meet their needs. Subsequently, information gathered at the interview will be shared on the college's system, Pro Solution. The strategies used and shared within the college are based on a short conversation, therefore, the members of staff who work directly with students regularly update the system in respect of the level of needs identified and the support required to meet those needs.

85. When a student does not disclose their learning, mental or physical difficulties, the teaching staff work swiftly and efficiently to identify those needs and make referrals for support.

86. In terms of the support provided to those students who have, or may have, SEND, the college has in place:

- Dyslexia and Dyscalculia Support Tutors;
- additional English and maths support;
- Communication Support Workers for the deaf and notetakers;
- IT Trainers for the visually impaired;
- special exam arrangements;
- small group workshops with vocational coaches;
- dedicated study areas;
- specialist Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) providing support for students with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, visual impairments, hearing impairments and autism spectrum disorders;
- LSAs providing classroom and/or personal care;
- mobility support;
- sighted guiding;
- a range of assistive technology software to enable access and inclusion;
- adapted/modified learning materials into accessible formats e.g. braille or large print;
- dedicated Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs);

- bus passes for all students; and
 - travel training to encourage independence.
87. The college has a very successful supported internships programme, enabling students to build their skills and gain work experience. In respect of the programme, 100% of students have completed an external work placement and have valued the work experience opportunities provided. Placements have been secured at the Shaw Trust, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council and Autism Matters.
88. In terms of partnership working with the Local Authority, the college has a web page included on the Local Offer, which outlines the courses, support and facilities available.
89. A case study (*see minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel held on 17 January 2022*), shared by Middlesbrough College, demonstrated that:
- initial assessments are used well to plan, implement and target support for learners to ensure inclusivity and progression;
 - through transition and multi-agency work, learners have excellent support to choose pathways and accreditations that meet their needs; and
 - the college works effectively with the Local Authority to ensure high needs funded learners achieve as well as other students.
90. In respect of the case study, the impact of effective partnership working had ensured:
- the young person experienced a smooth transition from secondary education to further education;
 - the young person is really enjoying their time at the college;
 - the young person is progressing towards their targets;
 - the young person's bespoke package of support ensures they are included in class, their resources and coursework are adapted and their learning environment is inclusive.
91. In respect of transition planning, issues had been encountered with schools being unable to share data/information about students (without EHCPs) due to restrictions associated with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). If the college was able to obtain information on all students prior to enrolment, transition could be planned and managed more efficiently and enhanced support could be provided.
92. *Further information to evidence partnership working between the Local Authority and the college can be found in the minutes and associated documentation for the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, which was held on 17 January 2022.*

SEND Reviews

93. As a local area, a SEND review has been undertaken of all Middlesbrough's settings, i.e. for early years, primary, secondary and post-16. The purpose of the review was to identify strengths and areas of development. Outcomes of the review have been reported to the settings and actions are being undertaken to further develop/enhance support/training for members of staff. In addition, there is a Workforce Development Programme in place, which aims to ensure the training needs of staff in each setting are being met.

Term of Reference D - To investigate how Education, Social Care and Health work collectively to deliver SEND provision at a local level.

EHCPs

94. The 2014 reforms created a system from birth to 25 through the development of coordinated assessment of a single Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), which aims to improve cooperation between all services responsible for providing education, health and social care and gives parents and young people greater choice and control over their support. The statutory process allocates 20 weeks for completion of the EHCP assessment and in Middlesbrough, during 2020/21, 99% of assessments had been completed within that timeframe (nationally, that figure was just below 60%). Middlesbrough is performing well and is currently ranked 9th nationally, which is a significant achievement. The local area's figure demonstrates that Middlesbrough's children and young people are receiving support in a timely manner.

The SEND Strategic Group and Workstreams

95. To ensure the local area continues to meet its statutory duties and responsibilities (as outlined within the SEND Code of Practice), a SEND Strategic Group has been established. In terms of membership, the group has representation from the Local Authority, health, educational settings and parents. The SEND Strategic Group provides challenge and oversight and reports to the Children's Trust on a regular basis. The group has developed a number of workstreams, focussing on areas linked to the key priorities, as identified within the SEND Strategy. The workstreams are:

- Data, Quality and Outcomes
- SEND Sufficiency Planning: Education
- Joint Commissioning
- Preparing for Adulthood
- Workforce Development
- Behaviour Partnership

96. In respect of each workstream, self-evaluations are undertaken and the SEND Strategic Group regularly shares best practice regionally and nationally.

97. Through the work of the SEND Strategic Group, the local area continues to move forward with key developments to ensure that the needs of children and young people with SEND 0-25 in Middlesbrough are being met.

98. Through working together across the SEND Strategic Group, key workstreams, various task groups and engagement sessions; a number of key developments and improvements have been made. The following key developments demonstrate the positive impact of partnership working:

Improving support for children and young people with autism

99. There is an increasing number of children and young people being identified with autism and in particular, an increasing number of children with autism who have an EHCP and require some form of additional or specialist provision. For this specific cohort of children, there has not been a sufficient number of places to educate them locally and out of area placements were being used. To meet demand, and in light of feedback received from families, work was been undertaken by education, health and social care to analyse data in respect of future

projections in the short, medium and long-term. Following analysis, it was identified that there was a lack of secondary provision and the number of local specialist education placements needed to increase. It was evident that a secondary autism base, within a mainstream setting, required development to ensure more children and young people could access the support they required within the local area.

100. To meet demand, work was undertaken to develop an autism resource base at Acklam Grange School and changes were made to an existing base at Outwood Academy Acklam. The development of those bases enabled the Local Authority to build its capacity to educate children with autism within secondary settings. Work has also been undertaken with Abbey Hill School, which is based in Stockton and part of the Horizons Trust, to open a small satellite provision called 'Fairfax Provision'. The provision was set up in September 2020 at Hollis Academy to support young people with autism in Middlesbrough. Over a five year period, places available locally has increased up to 75.
101. As a result of increasing local education provision for those with autism, positive feedback has been received from families.
102. In terms of the needs-led neurodevelopmental pathway for children and young people with autism, feedback from parents identified that they had encountered long waiting times to receive a diagnosis for their child. In light of the feedback received, it was identified that a focus on needs, rather than diagnosis, was required. Parents had identified the need to access help and support at the earliest of stages. Significant investment has been made to develop a bubble of support and the Family Support Service. There has also been investment in specialist services, such as the joint commissioning of a service to provide speech and language therapy for 0-25. The service is currently being reviewed/evaluated alongside parents and carers, with an aim to develop/improve support.
103. The Sunflower Project focusses on occupational therapy and involves delivery of information and strategies. The project aims to provide parents/carers/educational settings with the ability to delivery lifelong support to children who experience sensory integration difficulties.
104. In terms of the key worker service, the service is delivered by Daisy Chain, which is a Stockton based charity providing a range of support services to children and adults affected by autism. It had been determined by the Transforming Care and the NHS Long Term Plan that a key worker will be allocated to children with a learning disability or autism. That key worker support has been widened by the local area to include those children who are demonstrating autistic traits or have entered the SEND pathway. The change plans to meet the needs of those requiring support, at the earliest of stages. Children, from the age of 3, and their families are able to access support from a key worker, such as sleep training and sensory training. The key worker also enables the family to coordinate and navigate services.
105. The local area has also developed a new improved neurodevelopmental diagnostic pathway, which had previously sat within the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). There is now a dedicated Neurodevelopmental Team, who are skilled in the early identification of autistic traits. There is a multi-agency triage panel, which covers specialist areas such as speech and language therapy, psychology, clinical psychiatry and occupational therapy. In addition, an autism coordinator provides direct support to families. The triage panel aims to ensure that, if a child does not meet the criteria to enter the autism pathway for a diagnosis, the family will be provided with care and support through signposting, key workers and the Family Support Service.

Covid-19

106. As a result of Covid-19, the local area had identified all those children and young people with EHCPs and had undertaken risk assessments. That work enabled the identification and sharing of information across agencies. Education, health and social care worked collectively to identify and prioritise children and young people with higher needs, ensuring they received the required support swiftly. By working collectively, a direct and coordinated approach has been established to ensure the needs of children and young people are met. Weekly multi-agency meetings are held, with families, to ensure seamless support is provided, without delay. Improved data sharing has also been introduced, which has led to a robust data sharing agreement between the provider trusts and the Local Authority. The agreement allows the long-term sharing of data and information, in respect of needs, at a child-level.

Preparing for Adulthood Conference

107. In 2019, a Preparing for Adulthood Conference was held for young people. The conference was organised, led and facilitated by young people. The conference delivered a series of interactive workshops to encourage feedback from young people. That feedback was then utilised to inform service delivery and focus improvement work, which was led by the multi-agency Preparation for Adulthood Group. Feedback received from young people indicated:

- the Local Offer website needed to be more young person friendly;
- more employment opportunities were required; and
- more education on independence, in school and college, was required.

108. In light of the feedback received, the Local Offer website was reviewed and its content was improved to include more case studies, diagrams, images and videos. When the website had initially been set-up, it had been receiving approximately 33,000 hits a month, the website is now receiving over 100,000 a month. In addition, the number of supported internship placements, available locally, has been increased. In 2015, there had been three internships that has now increased to 34. Furthermore, feedback was shared with post-16 providers, resulting in the development of the curriculum to include delivery of new courses and modules around independence. Following the conference, young people commented that they felt their views, opinions and feedback were valued.

109. At the conference, it had also been conveyed by young people that they wished to celebrate their achievements and success. As a result, a celebration event was arranged - the Young People's Achievement Awards. There were 10 categories and the event provided schools and settings with the opportunity to nominate young people to receive an award.

Other Key Developments

110. Other key developments have included:

- improving coproduction;
- developing a Single Point of Contact in partnership with families;
- delivering a range of training to staff across settings and conducting peer reviews;
- the appointment of a Clinical Officer to support key developments and the work of the SEND Strategic Group;

- developing data systems through the Data, Quality and Outcomes workstream across education, health and social care to ensure all agencies understand the needs and changing needs of children and young people with SEND;
- developing the Local Offer in partnership with families and increasing its accessibility; and
- developing a Joint Commissioning Strategy in partnership with children, young people and their families.

111. *Further information to evidence how Education, Social Care and Health work collectively to deliver SEND provision at a local level can be found in the minutes and associated documentation for the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, which was held on 4 October 2021.*

Term of Reference E - To examine how the views, wishes and feelings of the child/young person and their parents are gained and how the child/young person is encouraged to participate as fully as possible in decisions.

112. In terms of coproduction and the SEND Code of Practice, when carrying out functions in relation SEND, local authorities are required to have regard to a series of core principles:

- the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person, and the child's parents;
- the importance of the child or young person, and the child's parents, participating as fully as possible in decisions, and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions; and
- the need to support the child or young person, and the child's parents, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes and preparing them effectively for adulthood.

113. Effective coproduction enables young people, parents/carers and professionals across multiple agencies and sectors to work together as equal partners to design, plan, deliver and review support and services in order to achieve shared outcomes.

114. Coproduction recognises children and young people, parent/carers and professionals as assets who all have important contributions to make due to their differing knowledge, skills and experience.

Coproduction in Middlesbrough

115. To support the implementation of the SEND reforms, services across education, health and social care have worked closely with parents, young people and families to consider how best to implement the reforms across Middlesbrough. Themed working groups have been set up to understand each aspect of the reforms and how to develop and implement them across the local area. Initially, the key areas focused on the establishment of systems and processes for assessing needs, the format of the EHCP template and reviewing of EHCPs.

116. Feedback is requested frequently from families on the Local Offer, services, processes and practices. Families are also regularly consulted on key developments.

117. A Parent Partnership Group has recently been established, which involves forums/groups across Middlesbrough working collectively to develop/improve services and practices for families, such as the EHCP process.

118. Focus groups are established and project work is undertaken in respect of key themes, enabling families to review, reshape and improve practices in the local area.

Parents4Change

119. Parents4Change is a parent forum group. The group offers help and support to parents/carers of children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs.
120. Parents4Change is an advocate of Middlesbrough's families and the forum's input and work with the Local Authority enables the local area to identify problems and implement solutions, ensuring families are well supported in Middlesbrough.
121. Parents4Change is involved in the SEND Strategic Group and its workstreams and the group works in partnership with the Local Authority and Health. Parents4Change has been involved with developing and reviewing:
- the SEND Strategy and sharing it with families;
 - the EHCP process, updating paperwork and introducing a single point of contact for parents/carers;
 - the neurodevelopment pathway, which is a new pathway to support children and young people who are on the autistic spectrum;
 - the Local Offer to produce a directory, improve the accessibility of information and advertise the support and advice available for parents/carers;
 - a Parents4Change newsletter aiming to recruit new members to the group, highlight issues raised by parents/carers and provide information on the Local Offer and drop-in sessions;
 - the speech and language pathway;
 - the framework for short breaks and the commissioning process for identifying providers;
 - the eligibility criteria for children with disabilities;
 - the early years service to provide greater support in the community and increase the number of children and young people with SEND being educated in mainstream provision; and
 - supported internships in the local area to assist with getting young people with additional needs into work.
122. Each year there is a parents' conference, the Local Authority works in partnership with Parents4Change to plan and design the conference. The topics selected for discussion reflect the concerns of parents/carers and feedback is sought at those conferences. Topics discussed have included the SEND Strategy, HNF, short breaks, the EHCP process, health services, the Local Offer and preparing for adulthood. The next conference will primarily seek to improve co-production and encourage parents/carers to join the workstreams of the SEND Strategic Group. The conferences provide valuable information and are well attended by parents/carers across the town.

Coproduction and the EHCP process

123. In terms of coproduction and the EHCP process:
- Often the EHCP process is the first contact that a family will have with statutory-level services.
 - Having coproduction at the heart of the EHCP process enables the development of positive relationships with families.

- Children, young people and parents are included from the very start of the process. By working closely with schools, the Local Authority ensures families are fully informed when a referral for an EHCP is going to be made. Parents are invited to attend a referral planning meeting to discuss the needs of their child with a full range of practitioners.
- Once an assessment has been completed, families are invited to a Summary Assessment Meeting (SAM). At the meeting, information is shared about the child, including reports that provide a medical/professional context. The meeting provides parents with an opportunity to fully understand what this information means. At the meeting, a person-centred planning approach is taken and parents are asked their priorities and what outcomes they would want to see included in their child's EHCP. This information is then used to inform and develop the EHCP.
- Throughout the process, if parents are unable to attend meetings they are given the opportunity to complete 'Views' forms that are circulated at the different stages of the process. The forms ensure parents can submit their views regularly, in writing, if they are unable to attend meetings. Views forms enable parents to comment on a child's development, experiences and the impact of the child's needs. The information is then utilised to draft the EHCP.
- The draft EHCP is shared with parents for their comments.
- At the end of the process, parents are asked their preferences in respect of educational placements. Information, advice and guidance is provided to parents to enable them to make an informed decision about the most suitable placement for their child. The Local Authority also facilitates visits to the preferred schools.

124. The child/young person is actively encouraged to participate in the different stages of the EHCP process. There are 'Views' forms for children and young people. The EHCP process is very much centred on seeking the views, wishes and feelings of the child/young person.

125. In respect of the impact of EHCP coproduction:

- Parents4Change has been actively involved in reviewing the EHCP process.
- The process has been reviewed over time with Parents4Change to support on-going improvement and to continue to effectively capture the voice of the child/young person and parents/carers.
- Feedback on the EHCP assessment process has showed consistent 90% satisfaction rates from families.
- Through the ongoing developments of the EHCP process, it is evident from the feedback received from families that they feel fully involved in the process.
- A parent had commented "I have been given the opportunity to give my views and these have been taken in account". Views similar to that are communicated by many families.
- Middlesbrough has a very low tribunal rate, one of the lowest in the country. This is a reflection of the partnership working with families to achieve coproduced EHCPs and placement outcomes.

Transport

126. A primary concern for parents/carers is transport, due to a shortage of drivers. Although school transport is being provided by the Local Authority to enable children to access education, arranging transport to access respite care is proving difficult. Regular meetings have been held between the Local Authority's directorates to discuss solutions and determine a way forward.

Local Area SEND Inspection

127. In terms of the Local Area SEND Inspection, in July 2019 the Ofsted and CQC inspection team revisited the local area to inspect the sustained progress since March 2017. The inspection team commented that:

- families have greater involvement in discussion and decision-making about their children's needs and how best to support them;
- Summary Assessment Meetings (SAMs), held as part of the EHC assessment process, are valued by families; and
- there is evidence of coproduction of EHCPs.

128. SAMs have been specifically introduced by the local area to enhance coproduction with families. Not all local authorities have implemented this practice.

129. *Further information to evidence on coproduction can be found in the minutes and associated documentation for the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, which was held on 13 December 2021.*

Term of Reference F - To identify best practice strategies in supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools

130. In 2020, the Education Endowment Fund published guidance for school leaders, Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCo) and classroom teachers across mainstream primary and secondary schools.

131. The guidance states that supporting pupils with special educational needs should be part of a proactive approach to supporting all pupils - it is not an 'add on'. It means understanding the specific barriers pupils face to learning and what they need in order to thrive so that they can be included in all that the school has to offer.

132. The guidance report offers five evidence-based recommendations to support pupils with SEND, providing a starting point for schools to review their current approach and practical ideas they can implement:

Recommendation 1

Create a positive and supportive environment for all pupils without exception

- An inclusive school removes barriers to learning and participation, provides an education that is appropriate to pupils' needs, and promotes high standards and the fulfilment of potential for all pupils. Schools should:
 - promote positive relationships, active engagement, and wellbeing for all pupils;
 - ensure all pupils can access the best possible teaching; and
 - adopt a positive and proactive approach to behaviour, as described in the EEF's Improving Behaviour in Schools guidance report.

Recommendation 2

Build an ongoing, holistic understanding of your pupils and their needs

- Schools should aim to understand individual pupil's learning needs using the graduated approach of 'assess, plan, do, review'.
- Assessment should be regular and purposeful rather than a one-off event, and should seek input from parents and carers as well as the pupil themselves and specialist professionals.

- Teachers need to feel empowered and trusted to use the information they collect to make a decision about the next steps for teaching that child.

Recommendation 3

Ensure all pupils have access to high quality teaching

- To a great extent, good teaching for pupils with SEND is good teaching for all.
- Searching for a 'magic bullet' can distract teachers from the powerful strategies they often already possess.
- The research suggests a group of teaching strategies that teachers should consider emphasising for pupils with SEND. Teachers should develop a repertoire of these strategies they can use flexibly in response to the needs of all pupils.
 - Flexible grouping - Allocate groups temporarily, based on current level of mastery. This could, for example, be a group that comes together to get some additional spelling instruction based on current need, before re-joining the main class.
 - Cognitive and metacognitive strategies - managing cognitive load is crucial if new content is to be transferred into students' long-term memory. Provide opportunities for students to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning.
 - Explicit instruction - Teacher-led approaches with a focus on clear explanations, modelling and frequent checks for understanding. This is then followed by guided practice, before independent practice.
 - Using technology - Technology can be used by a teacher to model worked examples; it can be used by a student to help them to learn, to practice and to record their learning. For instance, you might use a class visualiser to share students' work or to jointly rework an incorrect model.
 - Scaffolding - When students are working on a written task, provide a supportive tool or resource such as a writing frame or a partially completed example. Aim to provide less support of this nature throughout the course of the lesson, week or term.

Recommendation 4

Complement high quality teaching with carefully selected small-group and one-to-one interventions

- Small-group and one-to-one interventions can be a powerful tool but must be used carefully. Ineffective use of interventions can create a barrier to the inclusion of pupils with SEND.
- High quality teaching should reduce the need for extra support, but it is likely that some pupils will require high quality, structured, targeted interventions to make progress.
- The intensity of intervention (from universal to targeted to specialist) should increase with need.
- Interventions should be carefully targeted through identification and assessment of need.
- Interventions should be applied using the principles of effective implementation described in the EEF's guidance report 'Putting Evidence to Work: A School's Guide to Implementation'.

Recommendation 5

Work effectively with teaching assistants

- Effective deployment of teaching assistants (TAs) is critical. School leaders should pay careful attention to the roles of TAs and ensure they have a positive impact on pupils with SEND.
- TAs should supplement, not replace, teaching from the classroom teacher.
- The EEF's guidance report 'Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants' provides detailed recommendations.

133. The overriding message from the report is a positive one. It is tempting to talk about the challenge of SEND as a specific and distinct issue. Yet, far from creating new

programmes, the evidence tells us that teachers should instead prioritise familiar but powerful strategies, like scaffolding and explicit instruction, to support their pupils with SEND. This means understanding the needs of individual pupils and weaving specific approaches into every day, high-quality classroom teaching - being inclusive by design not as an afterthought.

134. It also means using carefully implemented interventions and working effectively with teaching assistants to offer additional support where needed.¹

Developing and Sustaining an Effective Local SEND System

135. The LGA commissioned Isos Partnership to undertake a project to work with local councils and their partners to:

- a) draw together what partners in local areas have done to develop and sustain effective, system-level approaches to supporting young people with SEND;
- b) from these approaches, distil some key practical messages that could be used by partners in local areas across the country, adapted to their local circumstances and priorities; and
- c) share, develop and refine these key messages formatively and iteratively through co-productive discussions with leaders from local areas across the country.

136. The report has been written as a concise, practical summary of good practice in developing and sustaining an effective local SEND system. It has been written with the intention that this will be of use to elected members and officers in local councils, but equally to local strategic partners in clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and local health services, schools, early years settings and colleges, groups and networks of parents, carers and young people, VCS organisations and others with an interest in ensuring that there is effective local support for young people with SEND.

137. A summary of the key messages is included below:

Theme 1: Partnership working and co-production with parents and carers, and with young people

- ***Demonstrate commitment to sharing challenges and solving problems in a spirit of co-production.*** Ensure that co-production feels meaningful, and not tokenistic, by engaging at a formative stage, openly sharing a problem and enabling parents, carers and young people to generate ideas and shape solutions.
- ***Empower and enable local groups of parents and carers to play a strategic role within the local SEND system.*** Identify specific opportunities for parents, carers and young people to influence the local SEND system at a strategic level and build the capacity of local groups and networks to play this role.
- ***Focus on broadening participation by engaging an ever-wider range of young people and families.*** Make broadening participation, and hearing from as broad a range of parents, carers and young people as possible, an explicit aim of the local SEND system.

¹ https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/send?utm_source=/education-evidence/guidance-reports/send&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=site_search&search_term=send

Theme 2: Strategic partnership working and joint commissioning across education, health and care

- **Develop and embed strong routines and processes for making decisions and commissioning provision across key agencies.** Ensure that there are explicit processes and protocols - about decision-making and the use of resources - that are used to consider commissioning of individual packages of support and overall services.
- **Ensure joint commissioning delivers better, joined-up support by planning pathways of support for specific types of needs.** Identify key areas of need - autism or mental health - and plan a coherent, seamless pathway of support for young people and their families.
- **Put in place effective governance structures and processes to ensure strategic decisions can be taken swiftly and effectively.** Whatever the make-up of council and CCG boundaries, ensure that there is a clear partnership governance structure in place that enables partners to make joint strategic decisions swiftly and effectively, and use existing governance mechanisms (such as the Health & Wellbeing Board) to ensure that there is an appropriate focus on support for young people with SEND.

Theme 3: Identifying, assessing young people's needs and ensuring they can access the support that they need

- **Focus on strengthening core processes and building a consistent understanding so that needs can be identified early and accurately (and the right support put in place).** Central to this is having a widely understood and consistently applied vocabulary for identifying a young person's needs (not for its own sake, but as a first step to putting in place the right support).
- **Ensure that information about local support is accessible and helps families and professionals to navigate the local system easily.** Part of this is about ensuring that the local offer is a useful tool that enables families and professionals to understand what is available, which services are best placed to support them, and how to access those services. Part of this is also about ensuring that there are mechanisms for local services to respond flexibly in instances when a young person requires a more bespoke package of support.
- **Put in place open, transparent and outcomes-focused processes for assessing young people's needs.** Ensure that assessment processes take a holistic view of a young person's needs while also identifying the support that is needed, and that decisions are taken in an open, informed and transparent manner.

Theme 4: Building inclusive capacity in mainstream schools and settings

- **Ensure that there is a clear strategy for building inclusive capacity in mainstream schools and settings.** This will require there being a set of consistent expectations about the support mainstream settings and schools will offer, but also a clear offer of support to build their capacity to deliver this support effectively.
- **Ensure that schools and settings have access to an explicit offer of targeted inclusion support.** Be clear what targeted support can be accessed, what will be part of a "core" offer open to all schools and settings (without requiring a statutory assessment and plan), and where there is an additional offer that settings and schools can tap into by using their own resources.
- **Ensure that inclusion support provided by education services is part of a broader, holistic and joined-up offer of support for young people's care and health needs.** Recognise the importance of supporting a child's needs in their education setting, but also that those needs may be linked to issues related to their family, home or health

needs that will require joined-up support from a wider range of non-education-based services.

Theme 5: Developing responsive, flexible and effective local specialist provision

- **Work with local specialist providers to develop robust routines for considering local needs and shaping local provision to meet them.** Developing an evidence-informed and collaborative approach to planning places in specialist SEND provision - both the state-funded and independent / non-maintained sector - so that there is an effective, collective plan for how local provision can meet local needs.
- **Develop a range of “mainstream plus” options.** This will include working with local mainstream and specialist providers and developing models for meeting young people’s needs in learning environments that match their educational and wider developmental needs, and allow them to remain connected to their local communities.
- **Develop collaborative processes for considering bespoke placements for young people with the most complex needs.** This will involve bringing local specialist providers together to work collaboratively to consider how they could develop bespoke packages of support to enable young people with the most complex needs to be supported in their local communities. This will also entail developing strategic and effective commissioning of placements in the independent and non-maintained sector, including working collectively with neighbouring local areas.

Theme 6: Preparation for adulthood

- **Be pro-active in gathering feedback from young people about their aspirations and use this intelligence to commission pathways that will enable young people to pursue their goals.** Engage young people who are likely to require further support or bespoke pathways to pursue their aspirations, and convene local education providers and wider partners to shape corresponding pathways.
- **In parallel, pro-actively engage local employers, and support them to develop opportunities for young people with SEND to make a successful transition to the world of work.** Take an incremental approach to working with local employers (in the private or third sectors, but also in the public sector – including the local council and health services) to develop pathways for young people with SEND to move into the world of work. Help employers to understand the needs of the young people with whom they will be working and to put the right support in place. Use this learning to show other employers how this can be done as well as the benefits of employing young people with SEND.
- **Ensure that there is a strong, joint local offer of education, health and care options to enable young people with the most complex needs to make a successful transition to adult life.** Ensure that there are effective processes for early planning of a young person’s transition to adult life, as well as enabling agencies to work together to put in place holistic packages of support that will enable a young person to thrive in adult life.²

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

138. During the course of the scrutiny panel’s investigations, information came to light which, while not directly covered by the terms of reference, is relevant to the work of the panel on this topic. This related to:

² <https://www.local.gov.uk/developing-and-sustaining-effective-local-send-system-practical-guide-councils-and-partners>

Increase in Demand

139. Given the increasing demand in the local area, schools and settings are under pressure to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and those who are at risk of exclusion. Schools have been experiencing high levels of Covid-19 infection rates, causing a high level of staff absence and impacting on the key training and development of staff members.
140. Schools are experiencing children across all year groups who are struggling due to the impact of the pandemic. Schools have also experienced pressures due to the lack of families accessing universal health services during lockdowns, such as the School Nursing Service and Health Visiting Service. As a result, some children's needs had not been identified and addressed prior to them starting school.
141. There has been an increase in demand for the Local Authority's Inclusion, Assessment and Review Service and Model. In addition, sufficiency issues have been encountered for children with SEND and for those who have been excluded. There is an unpredictable demand for school places for children with SEND and schools are struggling to manage and meet the needs of those children within the school setting.
142. In order to manage the increasing demand, the following mitigation measures have been introduced:
- The Local Authority is challenging and supporting schools to reduce the number of exclusions, which is currently a key area of focus for the organisation.
 - A specialist project has been set up with two secondary schools, in partnership with key agencies, such as Cleveland Police and colleagues across Children's Services. The project plans to focus on those children who are known to multiple services, with an aim to understand how services are coordinated and delivered to support the child or young person and their family. The work plans to ensure that the needs of the child or young person are met and seamless support is being provided.
 - The Local Authority has been working to develop a training offer for schools, to upskill staff members and enable them to meet the needs of children. The training package includes the Education, Health and Care Assessment (EHCA) process and information on accessing additional resources and funding.
 - The Local Authority is working in partnership with health services to resolve the issues regarding access to universal services and some specialist services.
 - The enhanced Inclusion, Assessment and Review Service and Model was introduced in January 2022. The enhanced model provides access to a specialist teaching resource and outreach practitioner support. Those staff members are working directly with children and young people in schools to provide support.
 - The Local Authority has been focussing on its communication and support channels. Work is being undertaken to hold briefing sessions with schools and provide regular correspondence to ensure there are no delays in communication.
143. In terms of pressures in respect of 20 week statutory process, the following mitigation measures have been implemented:
- In respect of the Statutory Assessment Team, one temporary FTE post was appointed to in January 22, one temporary FTE has received approval to be advertised, agency support is being received for plan writing to ensure the 20 week timescale is adhered to and additional education psychologists have been appointed to assist with the multi-agency assessment work.

- In respect of the Annual Review Team, additional roles have been incorporated into the team during a restructure and there is now two EHC coordinator posts within the team. In addition, approval has recently been granted for agency support for case work, to cover staff sickness/absence/increases in workload.
- In respect of exclusions, the Local Authority is working with Alternative Provision (AP) providers to enable them to become registered providers, which plans to manage demand in the longer-term. Agency support is being provided to assist in ensuring that 6th day education expectations can be met, which is a statutory duty of the Local Authority. In addition, a new commissioning model is being developed to improve effectiveness.

144. The Inclusion, Assessment and Review Service and Model is assisting schools in meeting the needs of children and young people and is actively preventing more exclusions. The model is a crucial part in managing demand in the longer-term.

145. In terms of pressures in respect of sufficiency, the following mitigation measures have been implemented:

- In respect of mainstream provision, the Local Authority is reviewing the funding model to streamline processes and ensure that schools are accessing funding in a timely manner. The Inclusion, Assessment and Review Service and Model is also preventing additional children and young people from being excluded.
- In respect of resource provision, the Local Authority is reviewing designations to increase expertise specialisms and work is being undertaken to expand provision to deliver support to those with SEMH needs.
- In respect of Specialist and Alternative Provision, the Local Authority plans to increase local places due to the increased demand. A review of the AP model is also being undertaken to increase registered provision. In addition, the Local Authority is planning to introduce an SEMH assessment centre at secondary level.
- In respect of independent provision, the Local Authority is working with local academies and other local authorities in the region to determine whether a local residential education model would be an appropriate response to support the complex needs of children and young people. Work is also being undertaken in partnership with rest of Tees Valley, with academies and maintained specialist provision to increase capacity in the region.

146. In terms of pressures in respect of health services, the following mitigation measures have been implemented:

- In respect of South Tees NHS Foundation Trust, additional clinics for therapy services have been arranged to reduce waiting times, the Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy pathway has been redesigned to increase accessibility for children, additional clinic sessions have been arranged with consultant paediatricians, advance nurse practitioners are being recruited to assist with managing demand in respect of paediatric referrals and community nurse structures are being reviewed to ensure the role of the advanced nurse practitioners is embedded.
- In respect of mental health services, strategic leadership has been restructured to ensure a clear pathway into services, the neurodevelopmental pathway is now underway to provide a bubble of support and workforce development opportunities have been increased for the GP and primary care network to increase uptake of Annual Health Checks for children and young people with learning disabilities.
- In respect of community services, a SEND nurse has now been appointed for 0-19 services, capacity of 0-19 services is increasing to assist with the delivery of universal

and targeted work at an earlier point. In addition, a Dynamic Support Register and Community Education and Treatment Review (CETR) pathways are being developed to identify those at risk, at an earlier point, to prevent escalation to a hospital admission.

147. In terms of pressures in respect of social care, the following mitigation measures have been implemented:

- a new Designated Social Care Officer role has been created to provide good quality social care advice in respect of every EHCP and interviews to appoint to the role are scheduled to take place shortly;
- the number of social workers and senior practitioners has been increased;
- community activities will be re-commissioned by June 2022;
- the eligibility criteria for Children with Disabilities Service has been revised; and
- Lead Practice Champions will be appointed to upskill and support staff members in undertaking social work.

148. *Further information on pressures across education, health and social care with regards to children and young people with SEND and those at risk of exclusion can be found in the minutes and associated documentation for the meeting of the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, which was held on 21 March 2022.*

CONCLUSIONS

149. Based on the evidence, given throughout the investigation, the scrutiny panel concluded that:

Key data

- a) In 2021, the number of pupils attending school and/or settings in Middlesbrough who had an EHCP, was slightly lower than the north east rate but in line with the national rate. A total of 3,459 pupils in Middlesbrough schools were in receipt of SEN Support (13.8% of the overall school population), which was higher than both the north east rate (12.9%) and national rate (12.2%). The gap between non-SEND and SEND pupils, achieving a good level of development at the end of early years, continues to close. This was a 5% improvement compared to the national average. Other areas of significant improvement and where local scores outperform national scores are KS2 Reading and Mathematics - where there is a 10% improvement; KS4 English and Mathematics Level 4 and 5 where there is also a 10% difference of closing the gap compared to national rates.

Impact of SEND

- b) As identified in the SEND Code of Practice, four broad areas give an overview of the range of special educational needs and disabilities that children and young people may experience, these include Cognition and Learning; Communication and Interaction; Physical, Medical and Sensory and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH). SEND can affect a child or young person's ability to learn, their behaviour or ability to socialise, reading and writing, ability to understand things, concentration levels and physical ability. Some learning difficulties and disabilities occur across the range of cognitive ability and, left unaddressed may lead to frustration, which may manifest itself as disaffection, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Working with early years providers, schools and colleges

- c) The settings consulted throughout the review (i.e. Rosedene Nursery Easterside, Ayresome Primary School, Caldicotes Primary Academy, Discovery Primary Academy, Green Lane Primary Academy and Middlesbrough College) clearly demonstrate that by effectively working in partnership with the Local Authority, partners and families; holistic and joined-up packages of support can be delivered to meet the care and health needs of children and young people with SEND. The settings clearly demonstrate inclusivity and the Local Authority provides a clear offer of support to enable settings to build their capacity and deliver support effectively. It is highly important that all of Middlesbrough's settings are aware of the explicit targeted inclusion support offered by the Local Authority via the Early Years and Primary Support Service (EYPSS) and the Inclusion, Assessment and Review Service and Model to identify needs, put in place support and review support plans.
- d) Although evidence suggests that needs are identified early, accurately and consistently and that effective transition planning processes are in place, restrictions associated with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) can sometimes lead to some pupils missing out on provision or experiencing unnecessary delays - this needs to be addressed. In addition, to further support positive destinations in adult life for young people with SEND, the Local Authority should link up with Middlesbrough College to provide placements for the college's supported internships programme.
- e) As a local area, a SEND review has been undertaken of all Middlesbrough's settings, i.e. for early years, primary, secondary and post-16. The purpose of the review was to identify strengths and areas of development. Outcomes of the review have been reported to the settings and actions are being undertaken to further develop/enhance support/training for members of staff. To support continuous improvement, it is important that a regular cycle of self-evaluation, across all partners, takes place.

Delivering SEND provision at a local level

- f) There is a great sense of joint responsibility and the partnership between Education, Social Care and Health has strengthened significantly over recent years. The local area has made good progress in addressing areas of significant weakness detailed in the written statement of action (WSoA) issued on 19 May 2017 and has made great strides in improving core processes and building a consistent understanding for identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of children and young people who have SEND. The local area's SEND Strategic Group, which reports to the Children's Trust, provides an effective governance structure to ensure strategic decisions can be taken swiftly and effectively. Through the work of the SEND Strategic Group, the local area continues to move forward with key developments to ensure that the needs of children and young people with SEND 0-25 in Middlesbrough are being met. The local area delivers better, joined-up support by planning pathways of support for specific types of needs. There is a stronger partnership-wide commitment to jointly commissioning services in a way which is responsive to children and young people's needs. For example, the local area developed an evidence-informed and collaborative approach to improve support for children and young people with autism by building capacity to educate children with autism within secondary settings and developing a new improved neurodevelopmental diagnostic pathway.
- g) It is evident that provision, opportunities and outcomes for children and young people with SEND continue to improve across the local area. Improved data sharing has been

introduced, which has led to a robust data sharing agreement between the provider trusts and the Local Authority. The agreement allows the long-term sharing of data and information, in respect of needs, at a child-level. Gathering and triangulating data, intelligence and feedback and using this to inform discussions with partners and stakeholders as well as individual young people and families, about the shape of local support and services, is highly important. It would be beneficial for a SEND annual report to be produced that demonstrates how data, intelligence and feedback has been used to support strategic planning arrangements and ensure that there is sufficient local provision and support.

Involvement of the child/young person and their parents

- h) The local area recognises the importance of working in a co-productive way and demonstrates commitment to sharing challenges and solving problems. Local groups of parents and carers, such as Parents4Change, have been empowered to play a strategic role within the local SEND system and have contributed strongly to improving services and support for children and young people with SEND. Middlesbrough's families are fully involved in sharing their views, supporting developments and reshaping services. For example, there has been significant improvement in Education, Health and Care (EHC) assessment and planning. In addition, Summary Assessment Meetings (SAMs), which have been specifically introduced by the local area to enhance coproduction, are highly valued by families because they feel that their views and experiences are heard, understood and acted upon by local area leaders. Feedback on the EHCP assessment process has showed consistent 90% satisfaction rates from families and Middlesbrough has a very low tribunal rate, one of the lowest in the country. These rates demonstrate effective partnership working with families to achieve coproduced EHCPs and placement outcomes.
- i) Currently, a primary concern for parents/carers is transport, due to a shortage of drivers. Although school transport is being provided by the Local Authority to enable children to access education, arranging transport to access respite care is proving difficult. It is highly important that this issue is resolved as a matter of urgency.

Managing future demand

- j) Overall, it is clear that the challenges of the pandemic for local areas and for individuals have undoubtedly been great. Yet the negative experiences that many children and young people with SEND and their families have had during this time are not new - rather, they have been highlighted and intensified.³ The importance of the availability of good universal services to all children and young people with SEND across education, health and social care cannot be underestimated. Given the increasing demands, the local area continues to work together to ensure that the needs of Middlesbrough's children and young people are met and continues to develop its services in partnership with families to meet needs and improve outcomes. There is a need for the local area to continue driving further improvement in the SEND system and supporting children and young people at this critical moment.
- k) The local area has gone above and beyond to support children and young people with SEND and their families during this challenging time. The case studies shared throughout the review clearly demonstrate this. However, as the damaging effects of the pandemic on children and young people with SEND become clear, so too does the need to ensure that all partners are playing their role in supporting them. It is important that the

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-old-issues-new-issues-next-steps/send-old-issues-new-issues-next-steps>

Local Authority continues to invest time in fostering relationships and partnerships, given their importance to the local SEND system and the risk that those relationships could change very quickly. Given the increasing demand for provision to support those children and young people with SEND, it is vital that work continues to expand specialist provision and enable mainstream settings to provide support. It would also be beneficial to report on data/intelligence that demonstrates the specific strategic approaches or practices that have been effective in supporting children and young people with SEND, enabling them to achieve the best possible educational outcomes and preparing them effectively for adulthood.

RECOMMENDATIONS

150. The Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel recommends to the Executive:

- a) **That awareness raising activities are undertaken to ensure that all of Middlesbrough's schools and settings are aware of the Local Authority's explicit offer of targeted inclusion support.** There is a need for schools and settings to receive clear and concise information on what targeted support can be accessed, what is part of the "core" offer open to all schools and settings (without requiring a statutory assessment and plan), and the additional offer that settings and schools can tap into by using their own resources.
- b) **That work is undertaken with Legal Services and the Data Protection Officer to develop an effective transition planning process for all stages of education, which addresses the restrictions associated with GDPR.** For example, Durham County Council has developed an electronic process for primary school headteachers to share the names of students who may require additional transition support into secondary education. Wording, informing parents that information will be shared to support transition, has been included in the admissions brochure, on Durham County Council's website and in secondary application forms and offer letters.
- c) **That the Local Authority links up with Middlesbrough College to provide placements for the college's supported internships programme.** Supported internships have been introduced at Middlesbrough College to give a greater focus on preparing young people with special educational needs and disabilities with the skills needed for adulthood and employment.
- d) **That, to support continuous improvement, a regular cycle of SEND reviews takes place across all educational settings and outcomes are reported to the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel.**
- e) **That SEND annual reports are published to demonstrate how data, intelligence and feedback has been used to support strategic planning arrangements and ensure that there is sufficient local provision and support.**
- f) **That work is undertaken with the Integrated Transport Service to explore and identify solutions to ensure children and young people with SEND are provided with travel assistance to enable them to access respite care.**
- g) **That, to further promote effective partnership working, a local area partnership agreement is developed, which outlines how partners will work together and sets out responsibilities and agreed working arrangements.** Investing time in fostering relationships and partnerships, given their importance to the local SEND system, is highly important - as there is a risk that those relationships can change very quickly.

- h) **That the collaborative work undertaken by Education, Social Care and Health is commended and continues to drive further improvement in the SEND system.** Given the increasing demand for provision to support those children and young people with SEND, it is vital that work continues to expand specialist provision and enable mainstream settings to provide support.
- i) **That data/intelligence is collected, analysed and reported on to demonstrate the specific strategic approaches and practices that have been effective in supporting children and young people with SEND, enabling them to achieve the best possible educational outcomes and preparing them effectively for adulthood.**
- j) **That regular updates are reported to the Children and Young People’s Learning Scrutiny Panel, on a six monthly basis, in respect of the progress made with implementing the above recommendations and the work undertaken to develop and sustain an effective local SEND system.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

151. The Children and Young People’s Learning Scrutiny Panel would like to thank the following individuals for their assistance with its work:

- A Adamson - Vice Principal for Students and Communications, Middlesbrough College;
- K Allison - Chair, Parents4Change;
- G Brown - SEND Coordinator, Rosedene Nursery Easterside and Academy;
- R Brown - Director of Education and Partnerships, Middlesbrough Council;
- J Brownsell - SEND Coordinator, Green Lane Primary;
- S Butcher - Executive Director of Children’s Services, Middlesbrough Council;
- S Calvert - Principal Educational Psychologist, Middlesbrough Council;
- C Cannon - Strategic Lead for the Inclusion and Specialist Support Service, Middlesbrough Council;
- E Cowley - Head of Inclusion, Assessment and Review, Middlesbrough Council;
- J Duncan, Head Teacher, Discovery Primary Academy;
- T Dunn - Head of Access to Education and Alternative Provision, Middlesbrough Council;
- A Goring, Deputy Head Teacher, Ayresome Primary School;
- R Johnson - Treasurer, Parents4Change;
- J Kitchen - Early Years and Primary Inclusion Lead, Middlesbrough Council;
- J Libby - Head of Resources for the Inclusion and Specialist Support Service (ISSS), Middlesbrough Council;
- K Mellor - Vice-Chair, Parents4Change;
- N Mount - SEND Coordinator, Caldicotes Primary Academy;
- N Pearson - Member, Parents4Change;
- K Scraton - Head of Service for Children with Disabilities, Middlesbrough Council;
- K Smith - Head of Achievement, Middlesbrough Council; and
- R Wilcox - Clinical Officer, NHS Tees Valley CCG.

ACRONYMS

152. A-Z listing of common acronyms used in the report:

- AP - Alternative Provision
- CQC - Care Quality Commission

- DfE - Department for Education
- EHCP - Education, Health and Care Plan
- EYPSS - Early Years and Primary Support Service
- HNF - High Needs Funding
- SEMH - Social, Emotional and Mental Health
- SEN - Special Educational Needs
- SENCo - Special Educational Needs Coordinator
- SEND - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

BACKGROUND PAPERS

153. The following sources were consulted or referred to in preparing this report:

- Reports to, and minutes of, the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 6 September 2021, 4 October 2021, 8 November 2021, 13 December 2021, 17 January 2022, 21 March 2022 and 25 April 2022.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS MCCABE

CHAIR OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

Membership - Councillors D McCabe (Chair), M Saunders (Vice-Chair), A Hellaoui, C Hobson, D Jones, T Mawston, M Nugent, P Storey and G Wilson.

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**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) - ACTION PLAN**

6 SEPTEMBER 2022

SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	PROPOSED ACTION	POST TITLE	BUDGET COST	TIMESCALE
<p>a) That awareness raising activities are undertaken to ensure that all of Middlesbrough's schools and settings are aware of the Local Authority's explicit offer of targeted inclusion support. There is a need for schools and settings to receive clear and concise information on what targeted support can be accessed, what is part of the "core" offer open to all schools and settings (without requiring a statutory assessment and plan), and the additional offer that settings and schools can tap into by using their own resources.</p>	<p>Deliver a series of briefing and training sessions for schools commencing in September and running for the Autumn Term.</p>	<p>Strategic Lead for Inclusion and Specialist Support Services</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>Completed by December 2022</p>
<p>b) That work is undertaken with Legal Services and the Data Protection Officer to develop an effective transition planning process for all stages of education, which addresses the restrictions associated with GDPR. For example, Durham County Council has developed an electronic process for primary school headteachers to share the names of students who may</p>	<p>Create a transitions task and finish group to bring together all stakeholders to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compose a Transitions Guidance document for schools and parents • Develop an information sharing process for transition information for children with additional needs 	<p>Head of Achievement/ Head of Inclusion, Assessment and Review</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>October 2022</p> <p>December 2022</p> <p>December 2022</p>

<p>require additional transition support into secondary education. Wording, informing parents that information will be shared to support transition, has been included in the admissions brochure, on Durham County Council's website and in secondary application forms and offer letters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review letters, forms and paperwork in line with new processes • Strengthen the existing place planning arrangements for children with an EHCP 			<p>February 2023</p> <p>April 2023</p>
<p>c) That the Local Authority links up with Middlesbrough College to provide placements for the college's supported internships programme. Supported internships have been introduced at Middlesbrough College to give a greater focus on preparing young people with special educational needs and disabilities with the skills needed for adulthood and employment.</p>	<p>Establish a termly supported internship meeting with Middlesbrough College to Discuss placements</p>	<p>Head of Inclusion, Assessment and Review</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>October 2022</p>
<p>d) That, to support continuous improvement, a regular cycle of SEND reviews takes place across all educational settings and outcomes are reported to the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel.</p>	<p>A programme of SEND Peer Reviews will take place between June 2022 and June 2023. These will be across all Early Years, Schools and Colleges. Findings from the reviews will be shared in a full report.</p>	<p>Strategic Lead for Inclusion and Specialist Support Services</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>September 2023</p>
<p>e) That SEND annual reports are published to demonstrate how data,</p>	<p>Annual report from the SEND Strategic Group which will identify how data has</p>	<p>Strategic Lead for Inclusion and</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>September 2023</p>

<p>intelligence and feedback has been used to support strategic planning arrangements and ensure that there is sufficient local provision and support.</p>	<p>been used to support strategic planning</p>	<p>Specialist Support Services</p>		
<p>f) That work is undertaken with the Integrated Transport Service to explore and identify solutions to ensure children and young people with SEND are provided with travel assistance to enable them to access respite care.</p>	<p>Work with the Transport Service to ensure that children who meet the criteria for accessing travel assistance have access to this support</p>	<p>Strategic Lead for Specialist Support Services</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>September 2023</p>
<p>g) That, to further promote effective partnership working, a local area partnership agreement is developed, which outlines how partners will work together and sets out responsibilities and agreed working arrangements. Investing time in fostering relationships and partnerships, given their importance to the local SEND system, is highly important - as there is a risk that those relationships can change very quickly.</p>	<p>To further strengthen the SEND and Inclusion Strategic Group in line with the recommendations from the SEND Green Paper ensuring partners fully understand their responsibilities and work together to improve outcomes for children and young people.</p>	<p>Strategic Lead for Inclusion and Specialist Support Services</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>July 2023</p>
<p>h) That the collaborative work undertaken by Education, Social Care and Health is commended and continues to drive further improvement in the SEND system.</p>	<p>Continually review the model for delivery to respond to demand and deliver improvements, ensuring that good practice is shared across the system.</p>	<p>Head of Inclusion, Assessment and Review/ Head of Resources</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>July 2023</p>

<p>Given the increasing demand for provision to support those children and young people with SEND, it is vital that work continues to expand specialist provision and enable mainstream settings to provide support.</p>				
<p>i) That data/intelligence is collected, analysed and reported on to demonstrate the specific strategic approaches and practices that have been effective in supporting children and young people with SEND, enabling them to achieve the best possible educational outcomes and preparing them effectively for adulthood.</p>	<p>Develop a strategic performance scorecard, and a range of case studies, to be shared with the SEND and Inclusion Strategic Group to demonstrate effective practice.</p>	<p>Head of Inclusion, Assessment and Review</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>Dec 2022</p>
<p>j) That regular updates are reported to the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, on a six monthly basis, in respect of the progress made with implementing the above recommendations and the work undertaken to develop and sustain an effective local SEND system.</p>	<p>Update report to be produced</p>	<p>Strategic Lead for Inclusion and Specialist Support Services</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>January 2023</p>

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL



Report of:	Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Children's Services Executive Director of Children's Services
Submitted to:	Executive
Date:	12 July 2022
Title:	Final Report of the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel - Locality Working from a Children's Services Perspective - Service Response
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Strategic priority:	Children and young people
Key decision:	No
Why:	Decision does not reach the threshold to be a key decision
Urgent:	No
Why:	N/A

Executive summary

This report gives an overview of the investigation by the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel to examine what impact the locality working pilots in Newport and North Ormesby are having on Children's Services and specifically on the outcomes for the children and young people living in these wards.

It is recommended that the Executive notes the content of the scrutiny panel's final report on Locality Working from a Children's Services Perspective (Appendix 1) and approves the action plan (Appendix 2) developed in response to the scrutiny panel's recommendations.

The Executive could decide not to approve the report and therefore its recommendations and action plan but this would miss a valuable opportunity to contribute to the future development of locality working and improve outcomes for the vulnerable children living in the wards where the locality working model is in place.

Purpose

1. To seek the Executive's approval of the final report of the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Committee Locality Working from a Children's Perspective (Appendix 1) and the resulting action plan (Appendix 2).

Background and relevant information

2. On 8th October 2019 the Council's Executive approved proposals to implement two locality working pilot programmes in Newport and North Ormesby which would run for a two year period.
3. The locality working model, a place based approach, involves a systems change to the current operational delivery model in Children's Services and across the Council as a whole.
4. Newport was chosen as a site for a pilot programme because it is the fifth most deprived ward in Middlesbrough moving from the 123rd most deprived ward nationally in 2007 to the 38th most deprived ward nationally showing a significant deterioration and amongst other reasons it has a high rate of female victims of crime and high levels of anti-social behaviour.
5. North Ormesby was chosen as a pilot site because it is the most deprived ward in Middlesbrough and the second most deprived ward in England and has the highest number of looked after children with unemployment levels more than six times the national average and more than 60% of children living in poverty.
6. There are some differences between the two pilot programmes, mainly in terms of their management and the partners involved. For example, the Neighbourhood manager in North Ormesby has a Thirteen Housing contract of employment and the post holder in Newport is a Middlesbrough Council employee.
7. The aim of this investigation by the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel was to examine what impact these locality working pilots are having on Children's Services and specifically on the outcomes for the children and young people living in these wards. Better outcomes for Children is one of the nine main themes of locality working and has its own action plan that is reviewed on a monthly basis.
8. The terms of reference for this work were as follows.
 - a) To examine how Locality Working operates and will be developed in the pilot areas
 - b) To understand how the impact of Locality Working for Children's Services will be measured and how any future roll out of the model in other areas of the town will be determined
 - c) To identify best practice from other local authorities where locality working for Children's Services is working well.

9. In line with the terms of reference the Scrutiny Panel gathered a range of evidence in relation to the Locality Working pilot model currently operating in Newport and North Ormesby.
10. The following representatives from a range of Council Services and partner organisations attended scrutiny to discuss their involvement in the locality working pilots in order to provide a better understanding of how a multi-agency approach is working to improve outcomes for children and families:-
 - a) Early Help
 - b) Children's Social Care
 - c) Public Health South Tees
 - d) Selective Landlord Licensing/Public Protection
 - e) Newport Primary School
 - f) Newport Neighbourhood Police
 - g) Youth Focus North East
 - h) Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland
 - i) North Ormesby Primary Academy
 - j) North Ormesby Neighbourhood Police
 - k) Children's Centre
 - l) Community Safety/Street Wardens
11. The Locality Working Better Outcomes for Children action plan has the key objectives of
 - a) Creating stronger families,
 - b) Increasing educational attainment,
 - c) Reducing child sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation
 - d) Reducing the numbers of looked after children.
12. Staff from Children's Services have been in situ virtually with the localities for some time including dedicated officers from children's social care and Early Help. All attend weekly officer meetings and the Children and Families working groups to look at key issues as they arise.

13. Resourcing. Staff from Children’s Services deployed in the Locality Working Areas are as follows

Post (Fte)	Newport	North Ormesby
Early Help Senior Resource Worker	2	1
Social Worker	2	3
Team Manager	0.5	0.5

14. Early Help and Social Care staff work closely together within the localities, and across Middlesbrough, to ensure that any ‘step up’ or ‘step down’ of services is seamless. Staff generally feel locality working is a positive step with real benefits, such as:-

- a) Joint visits with other professionals working in the same area
- b) Families in the respective localities recognising staff when they are in the locality
- c) Greater knowledge of the community and partners particularly with neighbourhood wardens and housing colleagues
- d) Improved relationships with schools in the localities as practitioners are working with children attending the same few schools and can therefore build up stronger relationships
- e) More effective use of professional time
- f) A reduction in mileage

15. In terms of feedback from staff and service users, a quote provided from a Senior Early Help Practitioner (a) and from families receiving support (b, c, d,) in relation to their views on locality working, states:

- a) *“I do really think the concept works, or if I put it another way I really would not want to go back to Town Wide working.”*
- b) *“It brought A out of himself and he is doing a lot better than he was, she was really nice to talk too.”*
- c) *“The support has been well received and everything is going well.”*
- d) *“This time last year I was so depressed, now I am working and have a nice house, I don't struggle to get out of bed anymore.”*

16. Based on the evidence provided throughout the investigation, the Panel’s conclusions are as follows:-

- a) The Panel feels that, despite some delays mainly due to the pandemic, the locality working pilot programmes in Newport and North Ormesby are working well and are making good progress.

- b) It notes that the locality model has had a positive impact in both areas, including:-
- I. A reduction in anti-social behaviour and crime.
 - II. A significant increase in the number of residents who report feeling safer, both during the day and at night.
 - III. an increase in the number of people who state they intend to continue living in the area for longer
 - IV. Noticeable improvements in the physical environment.

17. The Panel welcomes the concept of locality based working and supports its continuation within Newport and North Ormesby and is supportive of the locality working model being rolled out to other areas of the town where it is identified there is a priority need based on analysis of demand and community consultation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

18. Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation, and the conclusions above, the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel makes the following recommendations for approval by the Executive:-

- a) The Panel supports the continuation of Locality Working in both Newport and North Ormesby and further supports the roll-out of the model to other areas of the town based on priority need, to be determined through demand analysis, community surveys and led by the evaluation report for consideration by the Executive.
- b) In supporting the Locality Working model in Middlesbrough, the Panel recommends that discussions with senior managers and directors of finance within all public sector partner organisations takes place with a view to appropriately and proportionately funding each locality working area to ensure sufficient staffing allocations to meet demand. The Panel would further recommend that appropriate core structures are in place within the locality teams to ensure that Neighbourhood Managers are fully supported and deputised for during periods of absence/holidays.
- c) The Panel acknowledges the high numbers of early help cases in both Newport and North Ormesby and notes the views of the Early Help Practitioners that they feel there are not enough practitioners to meet demand. The Panel therefore recommends that, subject to further analysis, consideration be given to the number of Early Help workers allocated to each area.
- d) The Panel notes the impact data in respect of Children's Social Care Services within the localities and that the number of children looked after remains high. The Panel acknowledges that, whilst social workers have been in place for some time in the locality areas, they have only fairly recently been moved into one team to ensure consistency of approach and management oversight. The Panel, therefore, recommends that impact continues to be monitored and reported to the Panel in six months' time.

- e) That Early Help Practitioners and the Social Workers be introduced to appropriate staff within each of the areas' schools to build up relationships and discuss children/families requiring support through regular dialogue and that the work of the locality teams is promoted and regularly discussed with school leadership teams.
- f) That school readiness and children's centre registrations continue to be monitored and promoted in a range of languages to maximise reach and take up of nursery places to ensure that children are ready for school to optimise their learning potential.
- g) That relevant community and voluntary organisations, including schools, are equally involved in the locality teams and that appropriate information sharing takes place to ensure:
 - i) That access to a 'signposting directory' of all services and organisations available to support families within the localities is available to all partners via the Neighbourhood Manager/designated co-ordinator.
 - ii) That programmes of activities and events designed to support children and families are planned, discussed and co-ordinated in advance between partners within the localities to avoid unnecessary duplication and ensure those who need help and support receive it. (For example, that the Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) provision is co-ordinated in conjunction with Feast of Fun activity to maximise appropriate take-up and avoid duplication).
- h) That stronger links are made, through Public Health colleagues if and where appropriate, between primary care and acute care providers including GPs, mental health provision, midwife and health visiting services with improved referral pathways to Early Help and Children's Social Care Services where appropriate.
- i) Ensure that all partners are familiar with Middlesbrough's threshold of need document when making referrals to children's social care to improve the quality of referrals and ensure that the correct level of support can be determined and provided as quickly as possible and that the document be readily accessible via the Neighbourhood Manager/designated Co-ordinator.
- j) The Panel considers that Locality Working in Middlesbrough should be better promoted and clearly branded to ensure that all partners, and the community, are aware of how it operates, who is involved and how to make contact. The Wigan Deal is a good example of this where each priority area has an 'our part' (the borough's public sector organisations and partners) and a 'your part' (residents) so that the principles of working together to achieve joint ambitions is realised with each partner aware of what is expected of them.

What decision(s) are being recommended?

- That the content of the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel's final report on Locality Working from a Children's Services Perspective (Appendix 1), be noted.
- That the action plan (Appendix 2), developed in response to the scrutiny panel's recommendations, be approved.

Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

19. By approving the attached action plan (Appendix 2) the Executive is endorsing the value of locality working from a Children's Services Perspective as identified by the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel.

Other potential decision(s) and why these have not been recommended

20. The Executive could decide not to approve the action plan (Appendix 2) but this would miss a valuable opportunity to contribute to the future development of locality working and improve outcomes for the vulnerable children living in the wards where the locality working model is in place.

Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Legal

21. There is no legal impact to be considered

Strategic priorities and risks

22. This report related to the strategic priority VUL 04. Implement and extend locality working and CYP 05 Consolidate and build on recent Children's Services progress to improve Ofsted rating

Human Rights, Equality and Data Protection

23. Protected groups would not be adversely affected by this decision.

Financial

24. No financial impact currently in report.

Due to the outturn position of Children's Services, 2021-22, we are not in a position to find additional budget or resource to fund any additional resource requirements for this if identified in evaluation.

Finance will support the evaluation of the impact of the next 6 months around cost avoidance and any benefits of moving resources across existing teams

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Please see accompanying action plan.	The Executive Director of Children's Services has the overall responsibility for this plan.	Please see accompanying action plan

Appendices

1	Final Report of the Children and Young People's Social Care and Children's Scrutiny Panel: Locality Working from a Children's Services Perspective.
2	Children and Young people's Social care and Services Scrutiny Panel: Locality Working from a Children's Services Perspective - Action plan

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MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

**FINAL REPORT OF THE
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE &
SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL
LOCALITY WORKING FROM A CHILDREN'S SERVICES
PERSPECTIVE**

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AIM OF THE INVESTIGATION

1. The aim of the investigation was to examine what impact the locality working pilots in Newport and North Ormesby were having on Children's Services.

MAYOR'S/COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

2. The scrutiny of this topic fits within the following priorities of the Mayor and Council:-
 - People – Children and Young People: "We will show Middlesbrough's children that they matter and work to make our town safe and welcoming and to improve outcomes for all children and young people."
 - People – Vulnerability: "We will work to address the causes of vulnerability and inequalities in Middlesbrough and safeguard and support those made vulnerable."

COUNCIL'S THREE CORE AIMS

3. The scrutiny of this topic aligns with the Council's three core aims as detailed in the Strategic Plan 2020-2024¹:-
 - People – Working with communities and other public services in Middlesbrough to improve the lives of local people.
 - Place – Securing improvements in Middlesbrough's housing, infrastructure and attractiveness, improving the town's reputation, creating opportunities for local people and improving our finances.
 - Business – Promoting investment in Middlesbrough's economy and making sure we work as effectively as possible to support our ambitions for People and Place".

TERMS OF REFERENCE

4. The terms of reference for the Scrutiny Panel's investigation were as follows:-
 - A) To examine how Locality Working operates and will be developed in the pilot areas.
 - B) To understand how the impact of Locality Working for Children's Services will be measured and how any future roll out of the model in other areas of the town will be determined.
 - C) To identify best practice from other local authorities where locality working for Children's Services is working well.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION/EVIDENCE GATHERED

5. In line with the Terms of Reference, the Scrutiny Panel gathered a range of evidence in relation to the Locality Working pilot model currently operating in Newport and North Ormesby and its impact specifically in relation to Children's Services.

¹ Middlesbrough Council's Strategic Plan 2021-24

The Place Based Approach/Locality Working

6. A place based approach, or locality working, involves a system change to the current operational delivery model across Council services, with the aim of achieving joined-up systems and a multi-agency approach between statutory organisations, relevant partners and the community, and to develop collaborative approaches to address the underlying causes of community problems whilst building strength and resilience within the community.
7. Evidence shows that there are benefits in having multi-agency teams working together from one location. For example, in some instances, the need for referrals can be reduced as a simple conversation with a member of the team can identify the most appropriate course of action, and through better information sharing, there are opportunities to identify support needs early and, therefore, proactively intervene to prevent crisis.
8. Another benefit of Locality Working is improved access for the local community as they have a single point of referral via the locality team. Quite often, people in need of advice or help require more than one service and may need multiple services' support.

Locality Working in Middlesbrough

9. On 8 October 2019, the Council's Executive approved proposals to implement two locality working pilot programmes, in Newport and North Ormesby, which would run for a period of two years.
10. Data gathered from a wide range of sources, including directly from the community and analysis on demand for Council services, supported the proposal for the pilot programmes to be implemented in the Newport and North Ormesby wards.
11. Through the pilot programmes there is an opportunity to 'make every contact count' and to focus on delivering services based on the service recipients and the communities in which they live.
12. In the context of Middlesbrough as a whole, life expectancy is 13.3 years lower for men and 11.2 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Middlesbrough than in the least deprived areas.
13. Public Health profiles show that Middlesbrough has high levels of suicide as a significant cause of death in young adults. It is also seen as an indicator of underlying rates of mental ill-health.
14. Across Middlesbrough in Year 6, 23% of children are classified as obese, in North Ormesby 34.8% of reception children are classed as overweight or obese, compared to the England average of 22.2%.
15. Levels of teenage pregnancy, GCSE attainment, breastfeeding and smoking in pregnancy are also worse than the England average.
16. Across Middlesbrough the rate for self-harm hospital admissions is worse than the average for England. This represents 486 admissions per year in Middlesbrough.

Background – Why Newport Ward?

17. Newport Ward is the **fifth** most deprived ward in Middlesbrough (moving from the 123rd most deprived ward nationally in 2007 to the 38th most deprived ward nationally in 2015). In addition, Newport has:-

- The third highest number of recorded racially motivated crimes (with only Central and North Ormesby having more).
- The second highest rate of female victims of violent crime².
- The third highest number of alcohol-related hospital admissions to James Cook University Hospital³.
- The third highest number of alcohol and substance related ambulance pick-ups⁴.
- High levels of anti-social behaviour.
- Second highest levels of fly-tipping⁵.

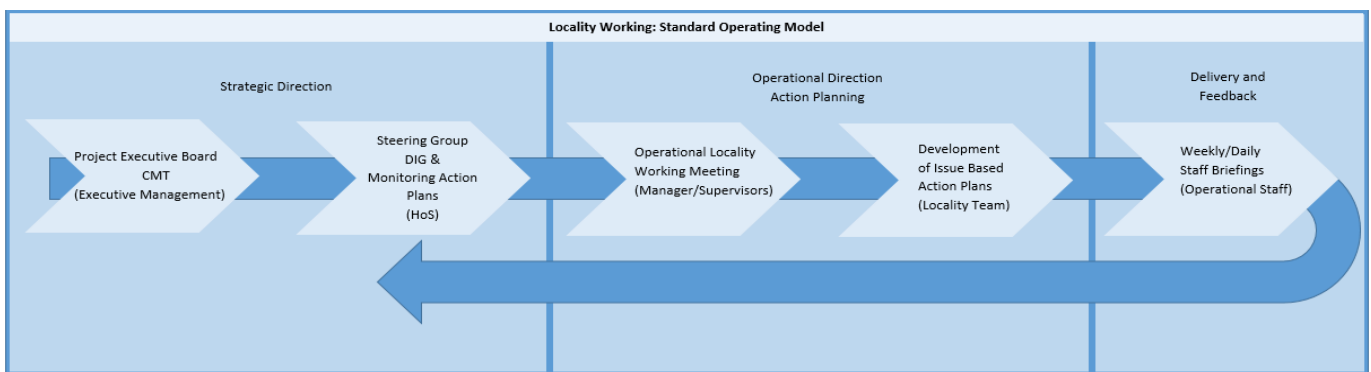
Background – Why North Ormesby Ward?

18. North Ormesby is **the most** deprived ward in Middlesbrough and **second** most deprived ward in England. In addition, North Ormesby has:-

- The second highest number of recorded racially motivated crimes.
- The highest rate of female victims of violent crime⁶.
- The highest rate of male victims of violent crime⁷.
- The second highest number of alcohol and substance related ambulance pick-ups⁸.
- The highest level of anti-social behaviour⁹.
- Second highest levels of fly-tipping¹⁰.
- Highest number of Children Looked After (with unemployment levels more than six times the national average and more than 60% of children deemed to be living in poverty).

Locality Working – Governance Structure

19. Below is a flow diagram showing the governance structure for the Locality Working standard operating model.



20. Strategic direction is provided by the Project Executive Board and Corporate Management Team made up of senior managers within the Council. A strategic Design and Implementation Group

² Recorded 2018/19 per 1,000 population.

³ Recorded admissions 2018/19.

⁴ Recorded data 2018/19.

⁵ Incidents reported to Middlesbrough Council in 2019.

⁶ Recorded 2018/19 per 1,000 population.

⁷ Recorded 2018/19 per 1,000 population.

⁸ Recorded data 2018/29

⁹ Cleveland Police data 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2019.

¹⁰ Incidents reported to Middlesbrough Council in 2019.

(DIG) was initially established until the pilots were up and running and a Steering Group to monitor all locality Action Plans remains in place. The strategic direction feeds into the operational direction and action planning via the Operational Locality Working meeting with Managers and Supervisors and the development of issue-based action plans within the locality teams. Finally, delivery and feedback is undertaken through the weekly or daily staff briefings with operational staff.

21. Meetings at an operational level are well attended by appropriate partner representatives in both Newport and North Ormesby. The meetings have been held virtually due to the Covid pandemic but this has enabled consistent communication with key partners. In addition, both Locality Neighbourhood Managers communicate on a regular basis and often attend each other's locality meetings in order to keep up to date with what is happening in each area.

Implementation of the Pilot Programmes

22. On 18 February 2020, the Executive approved a phased approach to the implementation of the Locality Working Pilots in Newport and North Ormesby, together with the respective staffing resource allocations based on demand and need within the communities.
23. Staffing resources were initially set, with scope to adapt and develop over time as the pilots became more embedded. However, the aim of locality working is not to merge staff from existing teams together in a single team under one roof, but rather to work as a collective from within their own departments and organisations. Multi-agency liaison is taking place much more freely under the locality working model and designated bases – at the Co-operative Building, Linthorpe Road for the Newport Team and North Ormesby Hub, Derwent Street for the North Ormesby Team – are now established.
24. There are some differences between the two pilot programmes, mainly in terms of the partners involved and management of the two pilots.
25. The Panel heard that during the process of establishing the locality working pilot the Council was keen to ensure that the programme was not perceived as an exclusive Council project. Following discussions with Thirteen Housing and other Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to ascertain whether there was interest in partnering with the Council to deliver the pilot, Thirteen Housing agreed to partner the Council and to part fund both of the locality Neighbourhood Manager posts.
26. North Ormesby already had an existing Neighbourhood Manager in post which was funded 50/50 by Thirteen Housing and Middlesbrough Council, therefore, this post was incorporated into the pilot model for North Ormesby. The post holder in North Ormesby has a Thirteen Housing contract of employment.
27. In Newport, the successful candidate for the post of Neighbourhood Manager was already employed by Middlesbrough Council, therefore, the post holder has a Middlesbrough Council contract of employment.
28. A series of priorities and objectives were established for both localities based on data analysis and a range of community engagement exercises and surveys to ascertain community priorities and aspirations. As a result, nine key themes were developed within both pilot localities, together with appropriate service leads. Individual multi-agency Action Plans were developed in respect of each of the thematic areas and these are reviewed on a monthly basis.
29. The nine themes are as follows (with the appropriate service lead identified in brackets):-
 - Making people feel safe (Police)

- Healthier population (Public Health)
 - Better economic outcomes (Education & Partnerships Team)
 - Better outcomes for children (Children's Social Care)
 - Improved environmental standards (Environment & Community Services)
 - Improved physical appearance (Environment & Community Services)
 - Improved customer experience (Stronger Communities)
 - Improved community capacity (Thirteen Housing)
 - Improved perceptions (Thirteen Housing)
30. All locality action plans have smart targets and actions and are linked to the Performance Management Framework (PMF) indicators. These indicators are also used to monitor impact and progress.

Who is involved in Locality Working?

31. A wide range of Council services and partners are involved in working in the locality working pilot areas. Partnership involvement is crucial to the success of locality working in order to work in a collaborative way to improve outcomes for the people of Middlesbrough.
32. As each locality has its own priority issues, this determines the partners that need to be involved in that area and the level of engagement required, although many services and partners are common to both localities. Key partners include statutory services such as Police, Health, Housing providers, some specialist commissioned services, local voluntary and community organisations and further links to schools, GPs, pharmacies and other partners, and of course, residents.

General impact so far

33. In terms of impact, it is difficult to put a figure on how many people the locality working pilots have reached as the outcomes the pilots aim to achieve may impact on people who do not necessarily engage with staff. For example, improvements in environmental standards – the 'flying squad' works across the full ward and everyone living near an area that has been improved will benefit from improvements, however, there may be no direct interaction with some of those residents. This does not mean that they have not been impacted by locality working. Another example of reaching the community through locality working is the numerous Covid vaccine pop up sites within both localities achieved through joint working particularly with Public Health colleagues. The locality teams aim to positively impact everyone living within the wards in some way.
34. The locality team also engages with residents and businesses across both areas, including schools, community groups, voluntary sector organisations and youth outreach. The teams regularly liaise with local business owners to ensure their views and concerns are included within the action planning process.
35. Resident surveys show that public perception has improved within both localities. Surveys were carried out with residents in Newport and North Ormesby, initially in September 2020, with further surveys linked to indicators undertaken in March and September 2021. The results of the surveys, in relation people feeling safe, are as follows:-

Newport	<u>September 2020</u>	<u>March 2021</u>	<u>September 2021</u>
Feeling safe during the day	31.18%	35.49%	68.65%
Feeling safe after dark	9.68%	12.9%	48.98%
North Ormesby			
Feeling safe during the day	32.61%	51.51%	77.14%
Feeling safe after dark	13.04%	21.21%	31.42%

36. This shows that there has already been a significant improvement in perceptions of safety in both localities.
37. In addition, surveys have also shown that the number of people indicating their intent to continue living in the area for longer has increased. On that note, in 2021, house prices in North Ormesby experienced the fastest increase than anywhere else in Teesside with an increase of 51% on the previous year¹¹
38. Impact data more specific to Children’s Services within the two localities is provided starting at paragraph 61.

Better Outcomes for Children

39. The ‘Better Outcomes for Children’ Action Plan has the key objectives of: creating stronger families; increasing educational attainment; reducing child sexual exploitation (CSE) and criminal exploitation and reducing the numbers of children looked after.
40. Staff from Children’s Services have been in-situ virtually within the localities for some time, including dedicated Officers from Children’s Social Care, Early Help and the Risk and Resilience teams. All attend weekly officer meetings and the Children and Families Working Group to look at key issues as they arise.
41. The Children’s Services Action Plan is led by a Senior Social Worker and is reviewed on a monthly basis. Performance Monitoring Framework (PMF) indicators, whether negative or positive, are fed back to the Strategic group for further discussion/assistance and regular progress reports are produced for assurance purposes and for the Executive.

¹¹ Evening Gazette article 05/02/22 [The Teesside neighbourhoods with the fastest growing house prices - Teesside Live \(gazettelive.co.uk\)](https://www.gazettelive.co.uk)

Children's Services in the Localities

42. In addition to staff from Early Help and Children's Social Care working across both localities for some time, the Risk and Resilience Team is leading on a multi-agency plan to tackle child exploitation and youth outreach work is delivered in both localities.

Early Help

43. Stronger Families, or Early Help, currently have three dedicated Senior Practitioners allocated to the localities – two assigned to Newport and one assigned to North Ormesby.
44. Any referrals requiring Early Help support in Newport and North Ormesby are received via the Multi-Agency Children' Hub (MACH), the 'front door' of Children's Services (in the same way referrals are received across the whole of Middlesbrough) and are allocated immediately to the Practitioners working within the localities. Case allocations are made on a daily basis to ensure families receive a swift response, and families are contacted by the Practitioner within three days.
45. Sometimes cases are 'stepped down' to Early Help services from Social Work teams where social care intervention is no longer required, but some form of additional support is still needed.
46. When Early Help Practitioners within the localities have high caseloads, the cases are allocated to Practitioners across the wider service. Whilst Team Managers and Assistant Managers work hard to try to avoid this happening, this is not always possible as demand for early help services across Middlesbrough is high.

Caseloads

47. As of November 2021, the caseloads open to Early Help Practitioners in both localities was as follows:-

	Senior Practitioner North Ormesby	Senior Practitioner (1) Newport	Senior Practitioner (2) Newport	Totals
No. of children on caseload	34	29	28	91
No. of families	14	14	13	41
Children whose cases are open for less than 6 months	22	16	20	58

48. It is worth noting, when looking at the above figures, that the number of families being worked with is significantly lower than the number of children being worked with. This is because Practitioners work with every child within each household and, therefore, work with multiple children per family.
49. The Panel heard that the ideal number of caseloads for an Early Help Practitioner is around 25-26 children. Whilst caseloads are slightly high, they are at a manageable level and have begun to reduce.

Children's Social Care (Social Work Teams)

50. Initially, one Social Worker was allocated to each of the localities but it was soon discovered that this was insufficient to cope with demand. Resources were subsequently increased to two dedicated Social Workers in Newport and three dedicated Social Workers in North Ormesby.
51. Referrals to Social Care (statutory interventions) are also made via the MACH by professionals working with children or by families. In instances where the family is new to Social Care and does not already have a Social Worker, they are assessed by the Assessment Service. Where it is identified that further work is needed the family is transferred to the Safeguarding and Care Planning Service. At this point, when case allocations are made, where the child/family live in Newport or North Ormesby, they will be allocated to a Social Worker assigned to those localities.
52. There are instances, however, where children from Newport or North Ormesby are allocated to Social Workers who are not assigned to the localities in order to avoid children having changes in Social Worker. As children's cases progress, there will be an eventual move towards stronger consistency of Social Workers within the locality model.
53. To improve consistency and alleviate pressures with case allocations and throughput, a single Social Work Team was established in November 2021. The dedicated team consists of a Team Manager and six Social Workers – five dedicated to working across both the Newport and North Ormesby localities and a sixth Social Worker for additional capacity when and if needed. It is now a priority to allocate Newport and North Ormesby families to this team.

Caseloads

54. All Social Workers within the statutory Social Care teams across the town are allocated no more than 25 children each. At the time the information was provided to the Panel (November 2021), some locality Social Workers continued to work with families outside of the localities, and some non-locality workers continued to work with families in the localities, therefore, it was not possible to provide a true breakdown of caseloads for social workers within the localities at this stage.

Benefits

55. Early Help and Social Care staff work closely together within the localities, and across Middlesbrough, to ensure that any 'step up' or 'step down' of services is seamless. Staff generally feel locality working is a positive step with real benefits, such as:-
 - Joint visits with other professionals working in the same area
 - Families in the respective localities recognising staff when they are in the locality
 - Greater knowledge of the community and partners particularly with neighbourhood wardens and housing colleagues
 - Improved relationships with schools in the localities as practitioners are working with children attending the same few schools and can therefore build up stronger relationships
 - More effective use of professional time
 - A reduction in mileage
56. In terms of feedback from staff and service users, a quote provided from a Senior Early Help Practitioner in relation to their views on locality working, states:

- *“I do really think the concept works, or if I put it another way I really would not want to go back to Town Wide working.”*

From families receiving support:

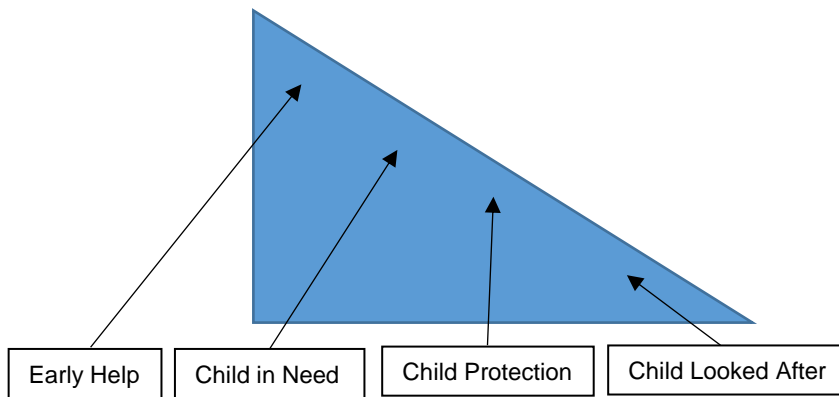
- *“It brought A out of himself and he is doing a lot better than he was, she was really nice to talk to.”*
- *“The support has been well received and everything is going well.”*
- *“This time last year I was so depressed, now I am working and have a nice house, I don’t struggle to get out of bed anymore.”*

What’s Not Working so Well?

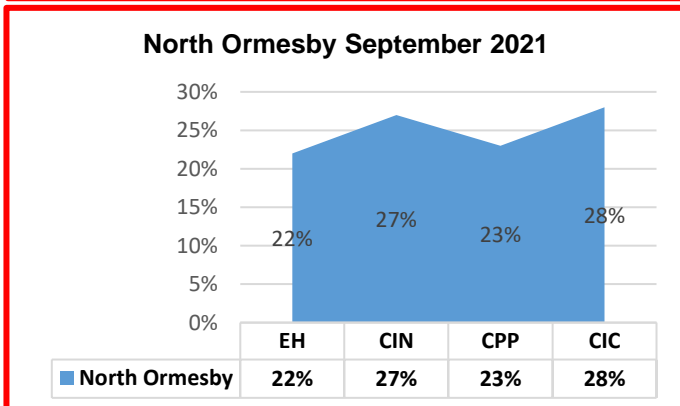
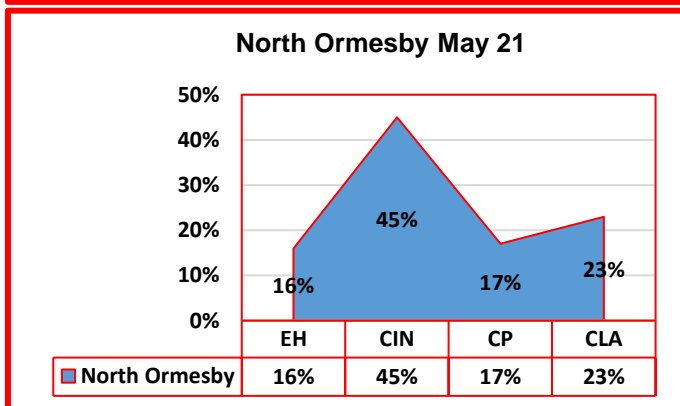
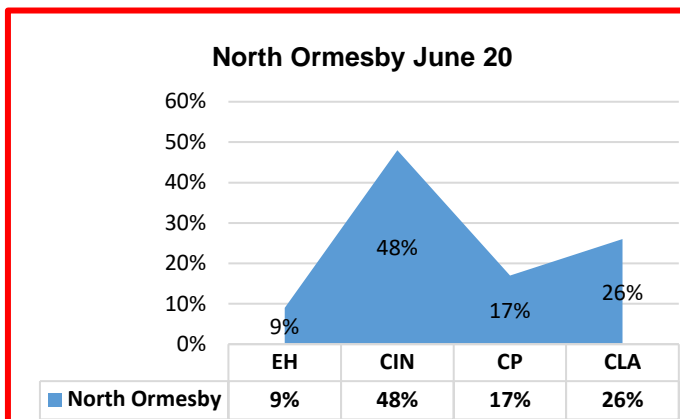
- 57. The impact of Covid and subsequent virtual working has made it more difficult to build working relationships between some partners, however, this is starting to improve now that there is a gradual return to a mix of office-based and virtual working arrangements.
- 58. Whilst Early Help services are operating successfully across Middlesbrough, staff feel that there are not sufficient numbers of Early Help Practitioners assigned to the two localities.
- 59. In general, there appears to be a lack of awareness of the pilot programmes with some services and partners.

Impact so far

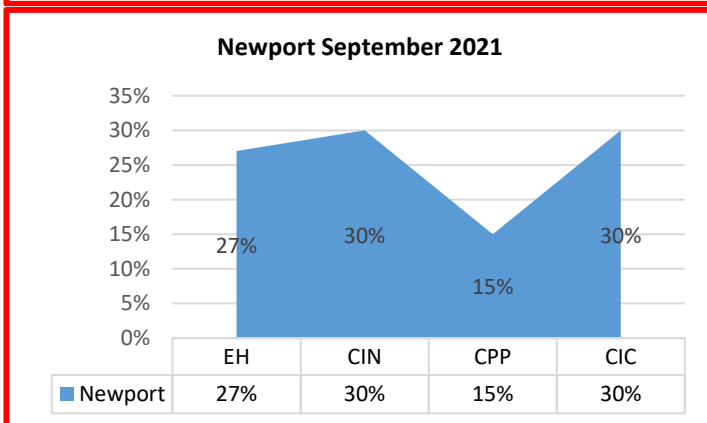
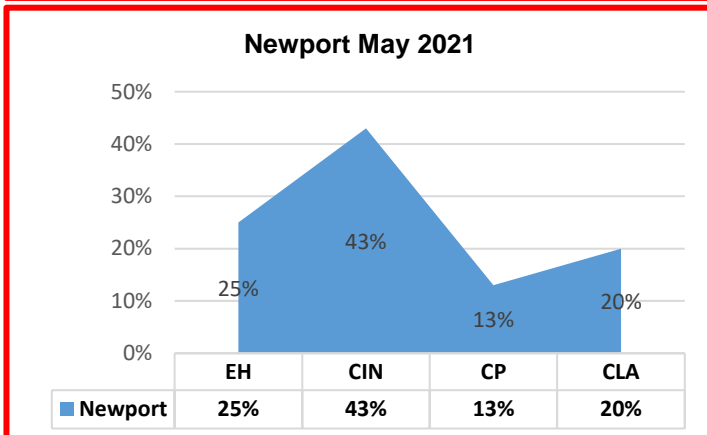
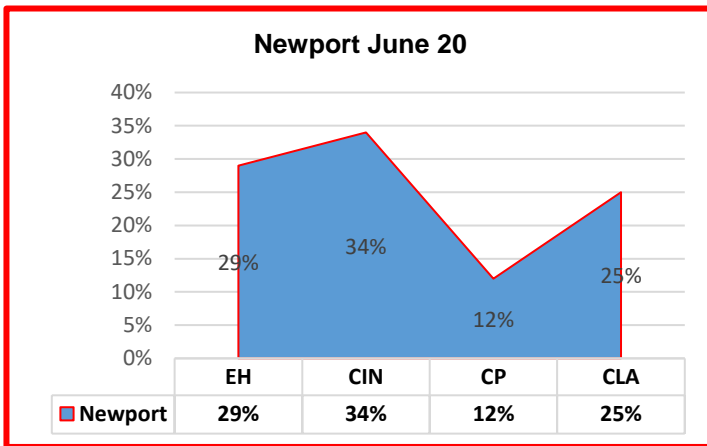
- 60. The Panel heard that the ‘ideal shape’ of service provision for Children’s Social Care was to have the highest levels of provision in early help, meaning more children and families were being helped at an earlier stage with less statutory intervention being required. This was followed by support provision for children in need, child protection and finally children looked after – where the aim is to have the lowest number possible.



- 61. From the graphs below, it can be seen that in North Ormesby, in June 2020, there was little Early Help activity (9%); a high number of children in need (48%); less child protection cases (17%) but higher numbers of children looked after (26%). By May 2021, it can be seen that Early Help activity increased to 16%, however, children in need (45%) and children looked after (23%) remained high. By September 2021, Early Help had significantly increased (22%), children in need reduced to 27% and child protection work increased to 23%. The number of children looked after remains high (28%), however, it shows positive progress in that more Early Help work is happening in North Ormesby.



62. Data in respect of Newport shows that in June 2020 levels of Early Help were already quite high at 29%, this reduced slightly in May 2021 (25%) but increased slightly by September 2021 to 27%, therefore, Early Help provision appears stable. Numbers of children in need remain quite high and the numbers of children looked after increased from 25% in June 2020 to 30% in September 2021. From the data, it would appear that locality working in Newport may not be working quite as successfully as in North Ormesby in terms of children's social care.



Partner Services and Organisations

63. As part of its review, over the course of several meetings, the Panel invited a number of representatives from a range of Council services and partner organisations to discuss their involvement in the locality working pilots in order to provide a better understanding of how a multi-agency approach is working to improve outcomes for children and families.

64. The following partners attended:-

- Early Help
- Children’s Social Care
- Public Health South Tees
- Selective Landlord Licensing/Public Protection

- Newport Primary School
- Newport Neighbourhood Police
- Youth Focus North East
- Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland
- North Ormesby Primary Academy
- North Ormesby Neighbourhood Police
- Children's Centre
- Community Safety/Street Wardens

65. Each of the represented partners was asked to provide information in relation to their service/organisation and explain their understanding of the locality working pilots; how their service/organisation works within the pilots and how they are working with partners to achieve better outcomes for children and families in the localities. A summary is provided below.

Selective Landlord Licensing/Public Protection

66. Selective Licensing is a scheme which aims to improve the standards of property management in the private rental housing sector. All private landlords operating within a designated Selective Landlord Licensing area are required to obtain a license from the Council for each property which is rented out. The conditions of the license ensure that the property is managed effectively, and license holders must demonstrate their compliance.
67. The Selective Landlord Licensing scheme currently runs in North Ormesby and part of Newport ward, to help improve standards of accommodation, and social and economic conditions. Evidence shows that significant and ongoing anti-social behaviour coupled with low demand for housing are linked to the private rental sector in North Ormesby and Newport.
68. The Selective Landlord Licensing Team sits within the Council's Public Protection Service. The wider Public Protection Service has always worked in an integrated way with Children's Services across the whole of Middlesbrough, however, locality working affords greater opportunities and a framework for such work to be carried out more collaboratively. This includes Trading Standards who deal with age-restricted products including alcohol and cigarette sales which can impact adversely on young people.
69. More specifically, the Selective Landlord Licensing Team works closely with Early Help services, for example, Early Help may be working with a family living in a property in state of poor disrepair. This would be brought to the attention of the Selective Landlord Licensing Team and a joint visit would be undertaken, often including officers from Environmental Health, to inspect the property and assess whether it met an acceptable living standard.
70. When inspection or post-tenancy visits are undertaken, a checklist is used to ascertain whether the family is working with any other services and asked whether they feel they require help/support from any other services.
71. The Selective Landlord Licensing Team attend child protection meetings which feed into support plans for children and families and regularly liaise with Social Workers to discuss whether families meet thresholds for Early Help support or safeguarding concerns in order to make referrals where appropriate. Whilst carrying out housing inspections, any concerns are raised with Early Help or Social Care teams where appropriate.
72. The Team also works in conjunction with the Neighbourhood Safety Team in relation to anti-social behaviour issues, including preparing anti-social behaviour contracts, and they liaise with Social

Workers, where applicable. In instances where a child/young person is committing anti-social behaviour, a referral will be made.

73. With the aim of tackling anti-social behaviour in both localities, the Neighbourhood Safety Officer has established a fortnightly meeting with any Social Workers allocated to the young people involved to discuss ways forward and solutions.
74. The Selective Landlord Licensing Team can see the value of locality work and feels that the pilot projects are making good progress despite being hampered somewhat due to the Covid pandemic. *“There are real benefits in being located alongside partners to resolve issues more quickly”.*

Public Health

75. Public Health works with partners and local communities across Middlesbrough and beyond to promote, prevent and protect the health and well-being of local residents, of all ages with a particular focus on vulnerable people.
76. It works collaboratively to reduce mortality and morbidity from preventable causes by addressing lifestyle risk factors and is responsible for commissioning a variety of services such as sexual health services, drug and alcohol services, stop smoking services, school nursing and health visiting services. In addition, the service works with partners to address mental health and emotional wellbeing; obesity and nutrition; physical inactivity; workplace health; aging well; and diabetes and cardiovascular disease prevention.
77. The ‘Live Well Centre’, located in Dundas Arcade, Middlesbrough, is an integrated health and wellbeing hub, bringing together a range of externally contracted and internally delivered wellbeing services to holistically tackle some of the leading causes of health inequalities in Middlesbrough and support town-wide social regeneration.
78. Public Health has been involved in the locality working projects since inception, with two dedicated members of staff attached to the pilot projects – one in Newport and one in North Ormesby.
79. Public Health operates within the locality teams in its widest sense – to develop community engagement links; to ensure all services working within the locality teams are aware that they can approach public health with any concerns regarding health and wellbeing within the localities; signposting - directing people to services such as drug and alcohol services; helping with mental health and wellbeing.
80. In terms of the wider aspects of the project, Public Health staff regularly take part in community walkabouts and litter picks and make themselves known to local street wardens and residents to raise awareness about how they can help to improve health and wellbeing for families.
81. In terms of Public Health’s involvement in the Children’s Social Care agenda, within Newport, work has been undertaken in relation to improving the school environment, working with Middlesbrough Environment City, signposting regarding poverty and provision of quarterly data on child development and breast feeding rates in the area. Public Health wants to promote pro-active working with all other services and agencies to improve outcomes for people living in the area.
82. The Public Health Team considers that in some ways Covid has helped to raise its profile and the wide range of services it offers by showing that services can work differently to address people’s needs. Indeed, different ways of working forced by the pandemic have been more effective than ever considered possible.

83. Public Health is always keen to join any new approaches where there is real co-ordination and partnership working as this is essential to supporting families. It is acknowledged that some partners working within the localities are not fully aware of the wide breadth of services offered through Public Health and this requires further promotion. The pandemic has hampered achieving some of the aims set out by locality working – particularly where cross-office conversations may be beneficial in order to build relationships - and it is hoped this will be regained in the near future when safe to do so.
84. Public Health is supportive of a multi-agency approach on a wider scale in the future and feels this is the best way to address all of the issues that can affect an individual's health and wellbeing.
85. In many ways, the vision is that locality working hubs will operate in a similar vein to the principle of the Live Well Centre – where an individual with multiple needs can attend the centre and engage with a 'Motivator' who will address all of their needs, either directly or by engaging them with the appropriate services, such as drug and alcohol services, welfare rights, sexual health, mental health resources, etc. The locality working hubs offer similar opportunities to link into already funded services, whether that be a Council service, a Voluntary or Community Service or a national organisation. The key is to work better with the services that already exist and to build on the 'making every contact count' approach to make it the strength behind locality working.
86. From a Public Health perspective, improvements in outcomes in both localities are being recognised.

Newport Primary School

87. Newport Primary School is located within Newport ward. Whilst the school is not a driver of the locality working project it does work with services that support its children and families and their delivery model has changed as a result of the locality working pilot.
88. The areas where locality working has impacted most positively on the school include Early Help and Neighbourhood Safety.
89. In terms of Early Help, a Senior Practitioner is allocated to Newport and this has been very positive for the school, allowing positive relationships to be forged with school staff, children and families.
90. The Practitioner regularly attends the school to meet children and families and works with a range of agencies to help address multi-faceted issues and problems that families may be experiencing. For example, families may have problems with inadequate housing or difficulties with neighbours, which can impact children within the household. The Practitioner is knowledgeable about which agencies to contact to provide support to the family.
91. In relation to caseloads, due to the large numbers of families requiring support from the Early Help Practitioner, it is not possible for her to carry all of the caseloads alone. Whilst the Practitioner supports the majority of families with children attending the school, some cases have to be allocated to other practitioners, but even then the school is complimentary of the professional approach and attitude of all Early Help Practitioners.
92. The Panel also heard that the Neighbourhood Safety Team has made a significant difference to families within the school. It is often the case that many issues faced by families lay outside of the education framework but still impact on children. For example, poor housing conditions, noisy neighbours, children not sleeping, etc. The school is now able to contact the Neighbourhood Manager or one of the locality team to report the issues and will be quickly signposted to the correct services for support. This saves time for school staff and ensures families are helped in the best way possible.

Newport Neighbourhood Policing Team

93. The Newport Neighbourhood Policing Team works alongside the Locality hub in Newport, linking with various services across a range of issues, including regular multi-agency days and weeks of action. The Panel heard that services are working much more closely than they had in the past and that this is continuing to strengthen.
94. Regular Neighbourhood Safety drop-in sessions are held at Newport Community Hub and Streets Ahead for Information where residents are able to speak to officers from Neighbourhood Safety and Cleveland Police, in confidence, to report issues or to seek advice and support.
95. A programme of work with young people in the area is underway and a dedicated PCSO engages specifically with young people at Newport Hub in a range of activities including the Middlesbrough Foundation kick about. The dedicated PCSO is well-known and respected within the community which is helping to build relationships between young people in the area and the neighbourhood policing team.
96. Some of the barriers to building relationships include language and cultural barriers, however, these are beginning to be broken down.
97. The Newport Neighbourhood Policing Team feels that the multi-agency approach is beginning to work and progress is being made. It provides an opportunity for the Police to link to a range of services through the Newport Neighbourhood Manager and the locality team which assists greatly with tackling crime in the area. The most recent crime figures for Newport show a reduction – partly attributable to successful joint operations between the Police and the Council to close down problem houses/tenants. Once more serious crime reduces, there is increased opportunity for lower level issues to be dealt with.
98. The neighbourhood police regularly attend Newport Primary School to chat with parents and children at drop off and pick up times and consider that working with children from a young age helps to build relationships.

Youth Focus North East

99. Youth Focus North East (YFNE) is a young people's charity covering the north east, particularly East Middlesbrough, including North Ormesby. YFNE is currently funded through the Big Local lotto-funded initiative and is approximately half way through a 10-year funded period.
100. Youth provision is delivered in areas where none, or very little, exists. Young people in the area are initially consulted with to discover their aspirations and to encourage and instil that they are capable of achieving amazing things.
101. Youth provision is delivered on Mondays and Thursdays at North Ormesby Hub, Derwent Street, for young people aged 10 – 18 years and includes activities such as cooking healthy meals from scratch that they can take home and share with their families; arts-based activities, sports and, where appropriate, intervention-based work such as substance misuse and sexual health.
102. YFNE participate in the weekly North Ormesby locality team meetings which are key to enabling young people's voices to be heard and to help take forward their ideas to improve their community. For example, YFNE is funded to create social action projects, focussing on ideas that will benefit the community and make it a nicer place to live.

103. YFNE is working with the North Ormesby Locality Team in order to implement some of those ideas – such as recent community litter picks undertaken by young people and an art project where young people had created decorative boards to cover void property frontages within North Ormesby to improve their appearance. This work was undertaken in conjunction with the Council and Thirteen Housing. In addition, in conjunction with the Locality Team, a Community Awards event was organised to celebrate people within the community and a similar event was also held in Newport.
104. YFNE has excellent engagement with the local community, with many of its staff living within the locality, and has found it beneficial to work with other organisations to strive for shared aims and objectives on a larger scale.
105. YFNE is funded from external sources and is not directly funded by the Council which can sometimes result in the organisation being left out of the loop in terms of information sharing. For example, where other services are involved with young people and families in the community, YFNE are not always made aware of this involvement at the start despite the fact that they may already be engaging with those young people on a twice weekly basis. Issues being experienced by the individual might have been resolved more quickly had the information from other services been brought to the attention of YFNE much earlier, allowing collaborative working and less duplication.
106. YFNE attend some of the Children's Social Care locality meetings and have found this very beneficial as it provides an opportunity to share issues or concerns regarding young people they are engaging with, allowing liaison with the young person's social worker in order to determine whether any additional support could be provided to that young person by YFNE. This also helps to avoid duplication of provision.
107. In general, YFNE considers the locality working pilot in North Ormesby to be working well with good oversight provided by the North Ormesby Neighbourhood Manager and that the team focusing on the North Ormesby area is doing the best they can to achieve positive outcomes for the community.

Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland

108. Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland (TM&C) was launched by the Archbishop of York in December 2012 as an expression of the Church Urban Fund (CUF) in the Diocese of York. Its work is shaped by local people, churches and organisations to help strengthen communities.
109. TM&C aims to address a range of social issues and its key areas of work are: children and families, loneliness and isolation, homelessness, mental health and wellbeing, food insecurity and asylum seekers.
110. As one of the partners involved in the locality working pilot projects, TM&C representatives attend both locality meetings in Newport and North Ormesby on a weekly basis. This provides an excellent opportunity to inform other partners of TM&C's activities and to be kept informed of all activities delivered by partners in the localities.
111. One of TM&C's key initiatives in relation to supporting children and families is the 'Feast of Fun'. TM&C is responsible for co-ordinating the Feast of Fun programme of fun activities and provision of healthy meals across Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland during school holiday periods. The aim of the project is to combat hunger during school holidays for vulnerable families who struggle to provide the cost of additional meals and entertainment for children outside of term time.
112. Funding for Feast of Fun provision is raised from external sources by TM&C each year. In turn TM&C supports around 40 churches and community organisations in order to deliver Feast of Fun within their own communities via small grants.

113. Whilst it is becoming increasingly difficult to access funding streams, one of the Feast of Fun's largest funding partners - Break, Meals and More – works closely with TM&C on an annual basis to ensure that the amount of funding available across Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland is identified at the start of each year.
114. Additional resources are also secured for other organisations that TM&C works with, such as Feast of Fun branding in order for organisations/groups to promote their activities in the community and co-ordinating and disseminating additional resources for groups to access, such as coach hire, free entry to tourist attractions, children's books, workshop providers, entertainers and healthy food ingredients. Some of the organisations TM&C works in partnership with include:-
- Newport Hub
 - Streets Ahead for Information
 - Youth Focus North East
 - Linx
 - Trinity Young People and Children's Project
 - Local Schools
115. The Locality Team meetings, as referenced earlier, provide TM&C with the opportunity to share information in relation to Feast of Fun delivery periods, which organisations may wish to be involved in and identifying possible funding streams.
116. Locality Working facilitates discussion around specific families that may be in desperate need of support during the holidays. Families requiring support are identified by schools, or an organisation working with a school or organisation working with TM&C. They can apply to TM&C for funding in order to support those families. Locality Working allows all of the agencies to liaise with each other in order to identify the right support and requirements for the family so that they receive the most appropriate support.
117. In terms of impact, during 2019, the organisations that participated in Feast of Fun, delivered **13,000** meals to children at a cost of **£34,000**. During 2020, Feast of Fun became Feast of Fun at Home due to the pandemic and **86,000** meals were delivered, costing around **£82,000**. During 2021, the provision was delivered both remotely and face to face and the number of meals delivered again increased to **117,000**, requiring funding in the region of **£117,000**. Alongside those meals, organisations delivered activity packs during periods of lockdown.
118. During 2021 in Newport and North Ormesby, through the Feast of Fun, **1,292** children and young people were supported; **398** adults were supported and **10,441** meals were provided, as well as enrichment activities.
119. The Panel heard that in 2021 the Holiday Activities Fund (HAF) was introduced and funded by the Council. The HAF provision is very similar to Feast of Fun, however, it is only available to children in receipt of free school meals within school during one week of each of the Christmas and Easter holidays and for four weeks during the summer holidays. This differs from the Feast of Fun provision which is available during all school holiday periods throughout the year and can support any family, which is beneficial as many families are on the borderline of receiving support. This places additional demand on Feast of Fun provision when it is delivered at times when HAF provision is not delivered. It is, therefore, crucial for planning and co-ordination of HAF and Feast of Fun delivery to take place when they are running in parallel to avoid duplication and ensure every young person has access to provision where needed.
120. Here are some examples of the feedback provided by families who have accessed Feast of Fun provision highlighting how valuable the support is for them and the impact it has:-

- *“I was in tears when I knew I had a pack coming its made a huge difference.”*
- *“This year on furlough has been hard, there is just so much stress trying to cover everything I need and not knowing how to get through the holidays. We don’t qualify for support but our outgoings are the same as they were on full pay.”*
- *“I was made redundant and just didn’t know how I was going to get through the school holidays.”*
- *“We lost income, but being self-employed there is nothing much we can claim, thanks for helping out.”*
- *“The whole area is just buzzing, a real feel good feeling of kids and families getting outside and having a great day.”*

North Ormesby Primary Academy

121. North Ormesby Primary Academy currently has 278 children on roll, with approximately 20% of those children receiving level four Children’s Services (children subject to statutory Social Work intervention due to acute/severe needs)¹² as well as many more children engaging at levels two (children with additional needs requiring Early Help support from one agency) and three (children with complex needs requiring Early Help support from multiple agencies).
122. The Panel was disappointed to learn from the Designated Safeguarding Lead, North Ormesby Primary Academy, that, whilst she was aware of some fantastic work going on within North Ormesby, she had not had any involvement in the Locality Working pilot and had not been invited to attend any of the locality area meetings. This has resulted in a lack of awareness of the range of services/organisations that families within the school community could be referred to for help.
123. This issue was rectified immediately following the Panel’s meeting with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and contact details were exchanged to ensure that the school is fully aware of, and involved in, the locality working team, ongoing work in the area and an opportunity to attend appropriate multi-agency meetings within North Ormesby.
124. The Panel heard that the Holiday Activity Fund was delivered from the school during the Christmas holidays but this had been the first time that children at the school were able to access this provision. It was stated that the provision had been primarily for children in receipt of free school meals and those able to pay to attend. There is a large proportion of the community who are not able to access public funds or claim free school meals but lived on low incomes and would welcome such provision.

North Ormesby Neighbourhood Policing Team

125. North Ormesby Neighbourhood Policing Team, works alongside the Locality Team in North Ormesby.
126. In broad terms, the Neighbourhood Policing model operates across Middlesbrough on a similar basis to the locality working teams. In North Ormesby, the Locality Working Team and Neighbourhood Police Team complement each other and working relationships are enhanced by locality working.
127. The Panel heard a recent success story of how a multi-agency approach has had a positive impact on reducing anti-social behaviour in North Ormesby.

¹² Defined by the South Tees Safeguarding Children’s Partnership Interim Threshold of Need Document, Mar 2020.

128. Between June and August 2021, North Ormesby witnessed a spike in incidents of anti-social behaviour - a rise from approximately 35 per month to 50 incidents per month. This increase was due to a particular group of youths causing anti-social behaviour, disorder and criminal damage. The response through the Locality Team, predominantly working in conjunction with Selective Landlord Licensing and Neighbourhood Safety Officers, enabled greater information sharing and action, demonstrating a joint approach.
129. Police and Council Officers jointly issued anti-social behaviour contracts and warnings to perpetrators, highlighting that Police, PCSOs and Street Wardens are communicating and working together, presenting as a united team. The Council had led on the Anti-Social Behaviour Contracts which enabled Police to concentrate on pursuing the offenders for crime, leading to prosecutions and ultimately banning the ring-leader of the group from North Ormesby. This resulted in anti-social behaviour incidents reducing from a peak of 50 events in June/July/August 2021, to single figures by January 2022.
130. Of the residents that the Police engage with, feedback has been very positive, including parents of youths that had engaged in lower level anti-social behaviour, who commented that the area was a much nicer place to live. This is as a result of the action being taken through working within the locality model approach.
131. As part of the locality working approach, young people who had been involved in low level anti-social behaviour are invited to attend a presentation by youth workers to discourage them from engaging in such behaviours and to highlight the impact of their behaviour on others. This initiative is carried out in conjunction with the youth offending service. As part of the prevention work in the area, the 'mini police' programme in primary schools allows Police Officers work with the schools to identify the children that would benefit most from taking part.
132. In addition, the Council has commissioned youth work at both universal and targeted levels with Linx, The Junction and Middlesbrough Football Club Foundation. The Youth Offending Service now has a preventative arm and is becoming more involved in prevention work around anti-social behaviour.
133. The Panel heard that, when dealing with anti-social behaviour, improvements have been made in identifying vulnerability and linking in with Social Services. Issues are flagged between all partners, for example, to look at why a child might be behaving in that way, were there issues at home?
134. Protecting young people from drugs is also a priority and identifying the potential of being vulnerable to criminal exploitation. This is an area where the Police have made improvements in the last 3-5 years.
135. In broader terms, the Police has a successful working relationship with the Multi-Agency Children's Hub (MACH) (front door to Children's Services) with good information sharing processes in place. A profile compiled by the Police covering the Cleveland Police area identifies Organised Crime Groups and Anti-Social Behaviour groups which is a useful tool when multi-agency meetings are held to discuss young people who are at significant risk of exploitation.
136. The Police are leaders of the 'making people feel safe' Action Plan. Anti-social behaviour plays a big part in feeling unsafe, as did drugs. Mirroring the locality team, regular Multi Agency Response to Serious and Organised Crime (MARSOC) meetings are held to discuss intelligence and actions and how each of the partners can contribute to tackling serious and organised crime.
137. In addition, Police School Liaison Officers attended both primary schools in North Ormesby to deliver a six-week programme called 'Mini Police'. This includes various activities, culminating in delivering

an assembly to the whole school reinforcing messages around responsibility and not taking part in anti-social behaviour. The programme provides a good opportunity for children to be introduced to the Neighbourhood Policing Team in order to build good relationships.

138. The Neighbourhood Policing Team has experienced some challenges over the last 18 months, including the impact of Covid and extensive challenges with staffing cuts, however, officer numbers are slowly beginning to increase. There are a high proportion of probationary officers coming through but they need to be supported.
139. The Panel heard that the North Ormesby Neighbourhood Policing Team had also experienced challenges during the summer – tying in with the peak of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage issues in North Ormesby – when officers had often been deployed elsewhere. However, those officers were now returning to the team and figures for anti-social behaviour and crime were relatively low. Whilst there are areas of Middlesbrough with higher demand, it is essential for Officers to remain on duty in North Ormesby in order to build relationships in the community and to continue the positive work in the area, including prevention work.
140. Neighbourhood Policing aims to reduce and prevent crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour by use of targeted patrols; community engagement and problem solving. On a local level, the Policing Team's presence in North Ormesby needs to be highly visible to have a high impact.
141. The North Ormesby Neighbourhood Policing Team feel that there are fantastic working relationships with all partners in the locality team, particularly Selective Landlord Licensing, Street Wardens and Neighbourhood Support Officers. Personal working relationships are strong and good results are being achieved and built on.

Children's Centre/School Readiness

142. The School Readiness team works with families with children aged (pre-birth) 0 – 5 years. They link with midwifery, health and other partners to ensure that expectant parents, parents/carers and children get the best support possible to improve a child's life opportunities and outcomes.
143. The Team helps to prepare children to be ready for nursery and primary school via a number of means, including Children's Centre universal activities such as baby play, stay and play, healthy child clinic's and parenting workshops. It also offers advice to all families working with Early Help services on how best to support their child/children's development through the key early year's stages.
144. Support is available to parents/carers to access good quality childcare, including free early education for two, three and four year olds (achieving two year olds, nursery education grant and 30 hour entitlement).
145. The Children's Centres offer all families (with children aged under five years) a range of services, information and support within their local community. The main aim of Children's Centres is to improve outcomes for all young children, by encouraging them to learn and advising parents how they can support this at home.
146. Once parents/carers register with the Centres they can be signposted to information, advice and guidance. Registered families become part of the Children's Centre's universal provision, including eligibility advice around free education for two, three and four year olds, healthy vitamins programme and 'best start' pathway (for 0-2 year olds).

147. Targeted interventions are delivered to identified families, for example, Chat, Play, Read, Sing is a literacy support programme, also Play and Learn Together (when children had completed their two-year-old health review) delivers key messages around supporting good home learning and reinforcing that family members are key educators.
148. Regular monitoring and follow-up is carried out with families to ensure they are aware of the services available to them and to advise them in relation to eligibility for free child care and also helping them to identify and access childcare settings.
149. The Children's Centres work in partnership with the locality teams in both Newport and North Ormesby and considers the impact of locality working on school readiness predominantly relates to better information sharing to ensure families are aware of available provision and how to access it, as well as providing good networking opportunities to raise awareness of local issues and to break down cultural barriers within the community.
150. The Panel heard that examples of working in a locality-minded way included working with colleagues from other services such as Selective Landlord Licensing and Neighbourhood Safety Teams and when colleagues have their own agenda for visiting families, wherever possible, the Children's Centres liaise with those colleagues to ensure opportunities are not missed to identify under-fives who may not be registered with the Children's Centre in order to ensure families did not miss out on information advice and guidance and to encourage and help families to understand the benefits of their children accessing education from a young age.
151. Children's Centres also work closely with Health Visiting colleagues and have shared pathways. Statutory contacts are actively followed up to focus on the learning and development of the child and supporting the parents in doing this.
152. During the Covid pandemic, the Children's Centres continued to offer an increased amount of support within Newport and North Ormesby. The Children's Centre covering Newport is physically based at Whinney Banks, West Middlesbrough. Pre-covid there were many activities taking place in the Centre but it was difficult for some families to get there. Since Covid the majority of provision is delivered digitally and families are being contacted by telephone, WhatsApp and other platforms to increase accessibility and this is was working well.
153. In terms of impact, reach data for Children's Centres that families from North Ormesby and Newport access is as follows:-

CHILDREN'S CENTRE	TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES REACHED		TOTAL NUMBER OF CONTACTS	
	2020	2021	2020	2021
North Ormesby	181	245	5,700	5,983
West Middlesbrough	628	878	3,335	3,345
Abingdon	462	758	5,464	10,493

154. This data shows a significant increase in the number of families reached from 2020 to 2021 across all three children's centres.

155. In relation to the take up of nursery places, settings that offer funded childcare to two, three and four year olds (universal and extended provision), is shown below (as at Autumn term 2021):-

North Ormesby ward

SETTING	A2YO	UNIVERSAL 3&4 YRS	EXTENDED 3&4 YRS
Dimples	45	21	9
The Pavillion	4	4	0
St. Pius School	0	1	0
*Minnows	32	7	0
*Top Corner	13	14	3
*School House	4	10	6

*These figures may include children attending who live outside of North Ormesby ward.

Newport ward

SETTING	A2YO	UNIVERSAL 3&4 YRS	EXTENDED 3&4 YRS
Ayresome School	29	0	0
*Archibald School	27	0	0
*Great Expectations	21	15	3
*Little Treasures	4	6	0
*Teacher Time Linthorpe	40	44	3
*Zizus	5	5	2

* These figures may include children attending who live outside of Newport ward.

156. Schools also offer universal 15 hours provision, increasing to 30 hours for eligible families of three and four year olds, but this data is not available.
157. The key challenges in terms of school readiness include cultural barriers, for example, for some families it is not the cultural 'norm' to use childcare for two year olds. Both localities also have high numbers of transient families. However, locality working, enables networking with colleagues who, in turn, are supporting information sharing regarding the Children's Centres and assisting with families whose first language is not English in order to raise awareness about the services available to them and potential eligibility for nursery places.

Neighbourhood Safety/Street Wardens

158. The Neighbourhood Safety Team works with partners and local people across Middlesbrough, as well as the two locality teams, to prevent and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour including vandalism, graffiti, deliberate damage to property or vehicles, groups of teenagers hanging around on the streets, fly tipping/littering, drug dealing/use, drunk or rowdy behaviour and chaotic families.
159. Attached to the Neighbourhood Safety Team, Street Wardens work within the locality model to support partners and colleagues, including colleagues in Children's Services.
160. Street Wardens have assisted with colleagues by carrying out 'door knocking', this included supporting the work of the Children's Centres.
161. As a whole, the Neighbourhood Safety Team, has an excellent relationship with Children's Services and works closely with them right across the town, however, this is enhanced by locality working.
162. Street Wardens regularly support partners with intelligence gathering within the community and are the eyes and ears on the ground, gaining information/intelligence which other services are not otherwise privy to.
163. Street Wardens assist Children's Services and Police to trace vulnerable/at risk young people who go missing. Daily Police briefings are held within the localities to discuss all incidents that had occurred within the last 24 hours, including vulnerable young people considered to be at risk of harm who go missing on a regular basis. Key information is distributed amongst the Street Wardens

together with photographs which allow the Wardens to gather information on contacts and properties visited by those young people and to report back to appropriate partners. This flags up risks with partners so that appropriate actions and interventions can be put in place.

164. In addition, Street Wardens regularly attend joint home visits with Children's Services and Neighbourhood Safety Officers to provide protection to staff and to develop relationships with young people and families to help keep them safe in the community.
165. The Street Wardens regularly attend organised youth groups across Middlesbrough but particularly in Newport and North Ormesby where there has been a great deal of targeted outreach work to help divert young people away from crime and disorder.
166. Wardens use the locality hubs on a daily basis whilst on operational patrol and are able to feed information and intelligence directly to partners in real-time and can act on task directions from partners in response to this. Locality working helps to speed up responses to the community's needs.
167. Street Wardens are also involved in a range of projects developed through the locality teams such as litter picks, back alley makeovers, weeks of action in relation to organised crime and drug activity whereby information is passed to Police for action.
168. From a community safety perspective, locality working has had a significant impact in both localities and has enhanced relationships by bringing together operational staff on a regular basis for key information sharing and development of action plans. This allows a more targeted and focussed service to be delivered in the community.

Next Steps

169. The Panel heard that the locality pilot projects will be evaluated using various methods including community surveys, data analysis and case studies.
170. An evaluation report of the pilots is being prepared and it is anticipated that it will be submitted to the Executive in June 2022 for consideration.
171. Outcomes and learning from the two pilot projects will inform whether the operating model should continue in Newport and North Ormesby and whether the programme should be rolled out to other areas of the town in some way.

TERM OF REFERENCE C - To identify best practice from other local authorities where locality working for Children's Services is working well.

172. As mentioned at the beginning of this report, the placed based partnership approach (or locality working as it has become known in Middlesbrough), seeks to achieve a joined up system change, centring on recognising the need to reconfigure relationships between statutory organisations, voluntary sector, the private sector, including businesses and residents in order to achieve change by developing collaborative approaches to address the underlying causes of community problems.
173. Part of the purpose of place based approaches is to build capacity within the community in order for residents to take charge of their own futures, to have a strong voice and to build social capital and connections within the community.
174. Several local authorities have sought to redefine relationships with their residents in different ways with focus on varying priorities.
175. Research undertaken by Think Local, Act Personal (Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCiE))¹³ looks at the evolving model of asset-based approaches and provides good practice examples where Councils and other organisations are taking practical steps to shift in the direction of an asset-based area.
176. An asset based approach firstly looks for the strengths, capabilities, resources and creativity within community and aims to co-produce all of an area's plans and services to address the needs and challenges of the community. Public sector bodies and their partners, volunteers and potential service users need to meet as equals to identify what is needed, and what the shared goals are for the area, and the best ways to achieve them together.
177. Three key components to achieving a whole system change are identified as:-
- Co-production, partnership and power sharing
 - Diversifying workforces and building local enterprise
 - A strategic approach to being asset-based.
178. There are several examples of local areas putting asset based actions into practice, all of which differ in form and scope but demonstrate imagination and commitment to make better places for and with people. These include:-
- City of York Council
179. The City of York Council has been using the original version of the asset-based area framework over several years to re-write relationships between the Council, citizens and the community. The Council's Head of Commissioning states : "*it has acted as a catalyst for change, creating conditions for success, informed by shared values and stories of impact.*"
- Camden Council
180. The 'Camden Mile' (pre-pandemic), encouraged Council staff to regularly go out into the local area to talk to local people, organisations and businesses with a view to finding community assets where they may not have looked before. Taking a wider view of what counts as an asset can reveal abundance where state resources are scarce and over-stretched.

¹³ 'Think Local, Act Personal' SCiE – 'Ten Actions for an Asset Based Area' December 2021, by Alex Fox OBE.

181. With loneliness reaching epidemic proportions for older people, and growing amongst all age groups, affordable housing for younger people is scarce.
182. Homeshare programmes take these two groups of people with problems and brings them together to provide solutions.
183. After careful vetting, recruitment and preparation, an older person looking for companionship and low-level practical help is matched with a younger person seeking somewhere affordable to live who provides them with help rather than rent. They provide companionship and learn from one another.

Leeds City Council

184. Leeds City Council has committed to working together with people to find out what they want to achieve and the best way to do this is by building on their own strengths, as well as the strengths of their family, friends and local community. The aim is to enable people to achieve their goals, reach their potential and reduce reliance upon traditional services. Social workers will build relationships directly with people replacing a traditional care management approach.
185. A lengthy assessment has been reduced to a two page conversational record helping drive change from 'What's Wrong?' to 'What's Strong', through conversations about what matters to people rather than what matters to organisations. The 'front doors' that the Council offers people are organised around 13 Neighbourhood Teams. These 'Talking points' are organised to have a useful conversation quickly at a local hub then acting on them.
186. Shared Lives is one of the schemes in operation in Leeds to address people's needs in the community. An adult or young person in need of long term support is carefully matched with an approved Shared Lives Carer for day or respite care support which can include help to prepare meals and medication or companionship and getting out and about.

Swindon Borough Council

187. Swindon Borough Council has developed a programme focusing on community groups with a local parish council at the centre. The National Development Team for Inclusion is supporting the Pinehurst Community led Support Programme to shape a 'Talking Point' programme where a social care, health or housing officer can be found at a community centre to offer advice to people in their local community space.

Kirklees Council

188. Ward Councillors at Kirklees Council have their own devolved budget which they make available to organisations and groups to support local people in their wards. The democracy services department supports councillors to manage this funding which is intended to connect democracy with community development.

Wigan Council

189. The most radical and notable example of an asset or place based approach is Wigan Council, and Middlesbrough's locality model is more closely based on this example.

190. Wigan Council developed its 'Deal for the Future', now known as 'The Wigan Deal 2030'¹⁴, in conjunction with residents, community organisations, businesses and public sector bodies over a five-year period. [The Deal 2030 \(wigan.gov.uk\)](http://wigan.gov.uk)
191. This ambitious plan was created following 'The Big Listening Project' – listening to 6,000, in 83 locations, sharing 10,000 ideas. Analysis of all those views and ideas resulted in **ten** key priorities for the borough:-
1. Ensure the Best Start in Life
 2. Happy, Healthy People
 3. Communities that Care for Each Other
 4. Vibrant Town Centres for All
 5. An Environment to be proud of
 6. Embracing Culture, Sport and Heritage
 7. Economic Growth that benefits everyone
 8. Confidently digital
 9. A well connected place
 10. A home for all
192. Each priority has an 'Our Part' (the borough's public sector organisations and partners) and a 'Your Part' (residents), so that 'The Deal's' principles of working together to achieve their ambitions continues and everyone knows what to do to play their part.



193. The Deal is about empowering communities, focusing on their strengths and talents and what makes them happy. It is also about delivering public services in a new way with staff that are positive, accountable and have the courage to do things differently.

¹⁴ Wigan Council – The Deal 2030 document

194. The Deal has pioneered a unique approach and has set a new course for working with people, public services, businesses and communities to make a better future for all.

CONCLUSIONS

195. Based on the evidence provided throughout the investigation, the Panel's conclusions are as follows:-
- a) The Panel feels that, despite some delays mainly due to the pandemic, the locality working pilot programmes in Newport and North Ormesby are working well and are making good progress.
 - b) It notes that the locality model has had a positive impact in both areas, including:-
 - a reduction in anti-social behaviour and crime.
 - a significant increase in the number of residents who report feeling safer, both during the day and at night.
 - an increase in the number of people who state they intend to continue living in the area for longer
 - Noticeable improvements in the physical environment.
 - c) During its review, the Panel spoke to a wide range of services and organisations involved in locality working. It appears that the concept of locality working is having a positive impact in general and more specifically on children and families living in the localities. The majority of partners feel that the multi-agency approach is beneficial and has improved working relationships and dialogue between partners and the community resulting in positive outcomes. However, the Panel found some instances where partners are less aware of the locality model and did not have full awareness of all the partners involved. For example, a mixed report from primary schools in the areas – with Newport reporting a positive impact through locality working - particularly in relation to Early Help and Neighbourhood Safety – and North Ormesby reporting a lack of awareness of the model. The Panel has since received reassurance from the Director of Children's Services that awareness of the model in North Ormesby has been improved.
 - d) Both Newport and North Ormesby have some of the highest rates in Middlesbrough for self-harm and drug and alcohol related hospital admissions and ambulance pick-ups, high levels of racially motivated crime, violent crime and anti-social behaviour. All of these issues can impact on the health and wellbeing of children, young people and their families. Whilst, the Panel acknowledges that Public Health colleagues form part of the locality model and play a vital role, it feels stronger links need to be made with the Primary Care Network (particularly local GP surgeries in the areas) and acute health services such as mental health providers, midwife and health visiting services, to ensure two-way communication of information.
 - e) The Panel is encouraged to hear all of the positive work ongoing within both localities and welcomes the involvement of external voluntary and community organisations and feels that they should be kept fully informed and invited to appropriate locality meetings within the areas. All partners should ensure that the right support is available to those who need it, without duplication.
 - f) The Panel welcomes the concept of locality based working and supports its continuation within Newport and North Ormesby and is supportive of the locality working model being rolled out to other areas of the town where it is identified there is a priority need based on analysis of demand and community consultation.
 - g) There are good governance structures in place with regular operational and strategic level meetings to discuss issues and progress which are well attended by relevant representatives and actioned appropriately.

- h) A range of relevant Action Plans have been established in both localities, including for Children's Services, and these are monitored appropriately. Each Action Plan has smart targets linked to the Performance Management Framework indicators which are used to monitor impact and progress on a regular basis.
- i) The Panel recognises that the needs of each locality are, and will be, different and that this may result in involvement of various different organisations to suit the needs of each particular locality, however, it considers that all statutory partners are constant and have a vital role to play in any locality and should be fully involved in any locality working programmes.
- j) With specific regard to Children's Services, the Panel feels reassured that Social Worker capacity has been increased via the establishment of a single team of Social Workers who will be allocated cases from the two localities.
- k) Whilst Early Help Practitioners are positive about locality working and feel that the concept works, they have stated they do not feel there are sufficient numbers of Practitioners assigned to the localities to cope with demand.
- l) The Panel notes that between June 2020 and September 2021, Early Help work in North Ormesby increased significantly and this is to be welcomed as it means more families are being helped at an earlier stage - before statutory interventions are required. During the same period, Children in Need cases reduced significantly, Child Protection cases have increased slightly, as have the number of Children Looked After, but are relatively stable. In Newport, in June 2020 levels of Early Help support were quite high, reducing slightly by September 2021, showing Early Help is relatively stable in Newport. Between June 2020 and September 2021, the numbers of Children in Need remain quite high and there was a 5% increase in the numbers of children becoming looked after. Based on the information provided to the Panel, this suggests that Early Help is working well across both localities but in terms of children's social care, this appears to be working more successfully in North Ormesby.
- m) In terms of school readiness, impact data provided to the Panel shows that, through a multi-agency approach, the number of families reached has significantly increased from 2020 to 2021 across all three children's centres accessible to families within Newport and North Ormesby.

RECOMMENDATIONS

196. Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation, and the conclusions above, the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel makes the following recommendations for consideration by the Executive:-
- a) The Panel supports the continuation of Locality Working in both Newport and North Ormesby and further supports the roll-out of the model to other areas of the town based on priority need, to be determined through demand analysis, community surveys and led by the evaluation report for consideration by the Executive.
 - b) In supporting the Locality Working model in Middlesbrough, the Panel recommends that discussions with senior managers and directors of finance within all public sector partner organisations takes place with a view to appropriately and proportionately funding each locality working area to ensure sufficient staffing allocations to meet demand. The Panel would further recommend that appropriate core structures are in place within the locality teams to ensure that Neighbourhood Managers are fully supported and deputised for during periods of absence/holidays.
 - c) The Panel acknowledges the high numbers of early help cases in both Newport and North Ormesby and notes the views of the Early Help Practitioners that they feel there are not enough practitioners to meet demand. The Panel therefore recommends that, subject to further analysis, consideration be given to the number of Early Help workers allocated to each area.
 - d) The Panel notes the impact data in respect of Children's Social Care Services within the localities and that the number of children looked after remains high. The Panel acknowledges that, whilst social workers have been in place for some time in the locality areas, they have only fairly recently been moved into one team to ensure consistency of approach and management oversight. The Panel, therefore, recommends that impact continues to be monitored and reported to the Panel in six months' time.
 - e) That Early Help Practitioners and the Social Workers be introduced to appropriate staff within each of the areas' schools to build up relationships and discuss children/families requiring support through regular dialogue and that the work of the locality teams is promoted and regularly discussed with school leadership teams.
 - f) That school readiness and children's centre registrations continue to be monitored and promoted in a range of languages to maximise reach and take up of nursery places to ensure that children are ready for school to optimise their learning potential.
 - g) That relevant community and voluntary organisations, including schools, are equally involved in the locality teams and that appropriate information sharing takes place to ensure:
 - i) That access to a 'signposting directory' of all services and organisations available to support families within the localities is available to all partners via the Neighbourhood Manager/a designated co-ordinator.
 - ii) That programmes of activities and events designed to support children and families are planned, discussed and co-ordinated in advance between partners within the localities to avoid unnecessary duplication and ensure those who need help and support receive it. (For example, that the Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) provision is co-ordinated in conjunction with Feast of Fun activity to maximise appropriate take-up and avoid duplication).

- h) That stronger links are made, through Public Health colleagues if and where appropriate, between primary care and acute care providers including GPs, mental health provision, midwife and health visiting services with improved referral pathways to Early Help and Children's Social Care Services where appropriate.
- i) Ensure that all partners are familiar with Middlesbrough's threshold of need document when making referrals to children's social care to improve the quality of referrals and ensure that the correct level of support can be determined and provided as quickly as possible and that the document be readily accessible via the Neighbourhood Manager/designated Co-ordinator.
- j) The Panel considers that Locality Working in Middlesbrough should be better promoted and clearly branded to ensure that all partners, and the community, are aware of how it operates, who is involved and how to make contact. The Wigan Deal is a good example of this where each priority area has an 'our part' (the borough's public sector organisations and partners) and a 'your part' (residents) so that the principles of working together to achieve joint ambitions is realised with each partner aware of what is expected of them.

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Lynn Blagg	Assistant Team Manager, Education & Partnerships
Joanne Tickle	Assistant Team Manager, Education & Partnerships
Stacey Carlisle	Deputy Head, Newport Primary School
Katrina Jackson	Advanced Public Health Practitioner
Louise Kelly	Selective Landlord Licensing Manager
Julie Pearce	Community Safety Manager
Sergeant John Sproson	North Ormesby Neighbourhood Police
Sergeant Steve Pattison	Newport Neighbourhood Police
Heather Insull	Youth Focus North East
Karen Deen	Together Middlesbrough and Cleveland
Cassie Williams	Designated Safeguarding Lead, North Ormesby Primary Academy

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following sources were used/referred to in the preparation of this report:-

Reports to, and minutes of, the Children & Young People's Social Care & Services Scrutiny Panel meetings: 21 September, 25 October, 22 November, 13 December 2021, 25 January & 21 February 2022.

Reports to the Executive: 8 October 2019, 18 February 2020.

Think Local, Act Personal' SCIE – 'Ten Actions for an Asset Based Area' December 2021, by Alex Fox OBE

Wigan Council website and 'The Deal' document.

COUNCILLOR D DAVISON CHAIR, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE & SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

The Membership of the Panel: Councillors: T Mawston (Vice Chair), A Hellaoui, T Higgins, M Nugent, M Storey, Z Uddin, J Walker and G Wilson.

Contact Officer: Joanne Dixon
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**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE & SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL
LOCALITY WORKING FROM A CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERSPECTIVE - ACTION PLAN**

12th July 2022

SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	PROPOSED ACTION (and SB comments)	POST TITLE	BUDGET COST	TIMESCALE
a) The Panel supports the continuation of Locality Working in both Newport and North Ormesby and further supports the roll-out of the model to other areas of the town based on priority need, to be determined through demand analysis, community surveys and led by the evaluation report for consideration by the Executive.	<p>Comment: <i>The success of Locality working In Newport and North Ormesby is being evaluated however a decision has been made to roll the model out to Hemlington due to the level of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in the area.</i></p> <p>Proposed Action: Determine the roll-out of the model of Locality Working into other areas of the town based the outcome of the evaluation report, demand analysis and community surveys.</p>	Director of Environment	No additional budget required	To be determined by the Evaluation report
b) In supporting the Locality Working model in Middlesbrough, the Panel recommends that discussions with senior managers and directors of finance within all public sector partner organisations takes place with a view to appropriately and proportionately funding each locality working area to ensure sufficient staffing allocations to meet demand.	<p>Comment: <i>The Children's Trust had an extraordinary meeting informing partner agencies about Locality Working so there is already some background knowledge about this model of working</i></p> <p>Proposed Action: Facilitate a workshop for senior representatives</p>	Head of Stronger Communities	No additional	December 2022

<p>The Panel would further recommend that appropriate core structures are in place within the locality teams to ensure that Neighbourhood Managers are fully supported and deputised for during periods of absence/holidays.</p>	<p>from partner agencies including voluntary agencies to determine the partnership’s ambition to develop a joint approach to Locality Working.</p> <p>Comment: <i>This part of the recommendation came from the fact that one of the locality managers was not available for a proportion of the time that panel considered Locality Working and therefore did not attend to present to members. An absence was considered to be of potential detriment to the particular project.</i></p> <p>Action: The Head of Stronger Communities responsibility for Locality Working ensures that there are robust cover arrangements when a Neighbourhood Manager is absent from a particular project.</p>	<p>Head of Stronger Communities</p>	<p>budget required</p> <p>No additional budget required</p>	<p>August 2022</p>
<p>c) <i>The Panel acknowledges the high numbers of early help cases in both Newport and North Ormesby and notes the views of the Early Help Practitioners that they feel there are not enough practitioners to meet demand. The Panel therefore recommends that, subject to further analysis, consideration be given to the number of Early Help workers allocated to each area.</i></p>	<p>Comment: <i>One of the Early Help workers reporting to Scrutiny commented that EH capacity was needed. However, resources are finite and demands on EH have grown considerably throughout the town. NB the Youth Service provision in Newport and North Ormesby (and soon in Hemlington has now enhanced the EH provision. In addition across the</i></p>			

	<p><i>town the amount of EH work held by the partnership at level 2 has significantly increased. EH is not just the local authority but an overall offer.</i></p> <p><i>This will need to be scheduled into the project plan for each locality area development</i></p> <p>Action: Early Help resources are allocated to Locality Working areas in proportion with the area’s demand and the overall existing EH resource.</p>	<p>Head of Prevention</p>	<p>No additional budget required for consideration purposes. (However, if additional resource is requested each additional worker would cost £28.5k/ annum plus costs’</p>	<p>To be considered for existing partnerships by September 2022</p>
<p>d) The Panel notes the impact data in respect of Children’s Social Care Services within the localities and that the number of children looked after remains high. The Panel acknowledges that, whilst social workers have been in place for some time in the locality areas, they have only fairly recently been moved into one team to ensure consistency of approach and management oversight. The Panel,</p>	<p>Comment: <i>If the figure is reported to Panel in 6 months that will only provide a 4 month monitoring period due to the lead time for submitting reports therefore a longer timescale is proposed.</i></p> <p>Action: The number of children and young people in the care of the local</p>	<p>Head of Children Looked After and</p>	<p>No additional</p>	<p>March 2023</p>

Appendix 2

<p>therefore, recommends that impact continues to be monitored and reported to the Panel in six months' time.</p>	<p>authority who have a home address in a particular locality working area is tracked for a further six months and presented to scrutiny.</p>	<p>Permanence</p>	<p>finances required</p>	
<p>e) That Early Help Practitioners and the Social Workers be introduced to appropriate staff within each of the areas' schools to build up relationships and discuss children/families requiring support through regular dialogue and that the work of the locality teams is promoted and regularly discussed with school leadership teams.</p>	<p>Action: Early help practitioners, social workers and school staff build on existing working relationships and working practices to improve outcomes for children with a social worker and supported by Early Help.</p> <p>Comment: <i>Whilst school leaders can be encouraged and supported to have these discussions the local authority is not in a position to mandate them to do so.</i></p>	<p>Head of Achievement</p>	<p>No additional finances required</p>	<p>October 2023</p>
<p>f) That school readiness and children's centre registrations continue to be monitored and promoted in a range of languages to ensure maximise reach and take up of nursery places to ensure that children are ready for school to optimise their learning potential.</p>	<p>Action: School readiness and children's centre registrations continue to be monitored and promoted in a range of languages to ensure maximum reach and take up of nursery places to ensure that children are ready for school to optimise their learning potential and report to the Scrutiny Panel by May 2023</p>	<p>Head of Achievement</p>	<p>No additional finances required</p>	<p>April 2023</p>
<p>g) That relevant community and voluntary organisations, including schools, are equally involved in the locality teams and that appropriate information sharing takes</p>	<p>Comment: <i>This can only be influenced not mandated</i></p>			

Appendix 2

<p>place to ensure:-</p> <p>i) That access to a 'signposting directory' of all services and organisations available to support families within the localities is available to all partners via the Neighbourhood Manager/a designated co-ordinator.</p> <p>ii) That programmes of activities and events designed to support children and families are planned, discussed and co-ordinated in advance between partners within the localities to avoid unnecessary duplication and ensure those who need help and support receive it. (For example, that the Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) provision is co-ordinated in conjunction with Feast of Fun activity to maximise appropriate take-up and avoid duplication).</p>	<p>Action: Drawing on the work of the Prevention and Partnership Board the Children's Trust will bring together relevant community and voluntary organisations to establish where necessary and promote and information sharing protocols in locality working areas to support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to a signposting directory, • The co-ordination of programmes of activities and events to support children and families 	<p>Director of Education and Partnerships</p>	<p>No additional finances required</p>	<p>December 2022</p>
<p>h) That stronger links are made, through Public Health colleagues if and where appropriate, between primary care and acute care providers including GPs, mental health provision, midwife and health visiting services with improved referral pathways to Early Help and Children's Social Care Services where appropriate.</p>	<p>Comment: <i>No issues or challenges have been raised but if so they would be managed as 'Business as usual'.</i></p>			

Appendix 2

<p>i) Ensure that all partners are familiar with Middlesbrough's threshold of need document when making referrals to children's social care to improve the quality of referrals and ensure that the correct level of support can be determined and provided as quickly as possible and that the document be readily accessible via the Neighbourhood Manager/designated Co-ordinator.</p>	<p>Comment: Ofsted has not identified any issues with thresholds and if any are raised in the future they will be managed as 'Business as usual'.</p> <p>Action: Provide additional training on thresholds to Neighbourhood Managers</p>	<p>Head of Prevention</p>	<p>No additional budget required</p>	<p>December 2022</p>
<p>j) The Panel considers that Locality Working in Middlesbrough should be better promoted and clearly branded to ensure that all partners, and the community, are aware of how it operates, who is involved and how to make contact. The Wigan Deal is a good example of this where each priority area has an 'our part' (the borough's public sector organisations and partners) and a 'your part' (residents) so that the principles of working together to achieve joint ambitions is realised with each partner aware of what is expected of them.</p>	<p>Action: That the Locality Working Steering Group considers the branding and promoting of Locality Working across Middlesbrough and submits a report to scrutiny with its proposals.</p>	<p>Director of Environment</p>	<p>No additional budget required</p>	<p>Jan 2023</p>

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL



Report of:	Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Children's Services Director of Children's Services
Submitted to:	Executive
Date:	6 September 2022
Title:	Final Report of the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel - Sufficiency and Permanency (Perceptions of Children in Care) - Service Response
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Strategic priority:	Children and young people
Key decision:	No
Why:	Decision does not reach the threshold to be a key decision
Urgent:	No
Why:	N/A

Executive summary

This report gives an overview of the investigation by the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel to examine placement availability, local sufficiency, permanency outcomes and how perceptions of children in care can be improved.

The implications of these recommendations and decisions within the report have been considered by the appropriate officers within the Children's Care directorate of the Council and are set out in the Action Plan.

The recommendation is that the Executive approves the report and its recommendations (Appendix 1 and 2) and the resulting action plan (Appendix 3).

The Executive could decide not to approve the report and therefore it's recommendations and action plan, however this may lead to a missed opportunity to

improve services for children in care relating to placement availability, local sufficiency, permanency outcomes and how perception of children in care.

Purpose

1. To seek the Executive's approval of the final report of the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Committee "Report from the Children and Young Peoples Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel, Sufficiency and Permanency (Perception of Children in Care)' (appendix 1), Addendum to Final Report Sufficiency and Permanency (Perception of Children in Care) dated 11 May 2022 (appendix 2) and Action Plan (appendix 3)

Background and relevant information

2. The Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel have considered children in our care, placement availability, local sufficiency, permanency outcomes and how perceptions of children in care can be improved.
3. The Scrutiny Panel's investigation focussed on several key areas as follows;
 - **Children Looked After**
To examine and compare the profile of Middlesbrough's Children Looked After population against national and statistical neighbours and to examine placement types and performance.
 - **Foster Care**
To establish a profile of Middlesbrough's foster carers, including current recruitment and retention initiatives and to examine the availability of placements for Children Looked After in Middlesbrough.
 - **Permanency**
To investigate the issues around permanency, including adoption, and to examine any initiatives and areas of best practice.
 - **Perception**
To challenge people's perceptions of children in care and to create a better understanding of Children Looked After for everyone involved in the process.
4. As Corporate Parents, all Councillors have a responsibility to ensure that the Council is meeting statutory duties towards all children in it's care and care leavers in accordance with relevant legislation including The Children Act 2004 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.
5. The Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel have proposed a number of recommendations. The implications of these recommendations have been considered by the appropriate officers within the Children's Care directorate of the Council and are set out in the Action Plan attached (appendix 3).

What decision(s) are being recommended?

6. It is recommended that Executive approves the sixteen recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Board 'Report from the Children and Young Peoples Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel, Sufficiency and Permanency (Perception of Children in Care) – Action Plan' (appendix 3)

Recommendations

7. Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation, and the conclusions made, the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel made the following recommendations for consideration by the Executive as follows:
 - a) The Panel supports the sustained efforts being made to reduce the number of children looked after in Middlesbrough in line with our regional statistical neighbours and that the performance scorecard being reported to LMT on a six-weekly basis in relation to this indicator be shared with the Panel on a quarterly basis
 - b) The Panel notes the high percentage of children (15.1%) who become looked after at birth and recommends that a specific piece of work be undertaken to establish why this is the case and that this work includes performance information and exploration of whether further interventions can be put in place to reduce this figure. If appropriate, a set of performance indicators should be identified to monitor improvement over the next year in the first instance.
 - c) That analysis be undertaken to identify any potential gaps in child protection provision in the more ethnically diverse wards and further work be undertaken to provide assurance that the statistical under representation/over representation of children of different ethnicities being looked after by the local authority aligns with the level of need amongst these groups.
 - d) That work is undertaken to identify how the provision of Early Help can be increased in North Ormesby, (subject to further analysis and if this remains appropriate), and that the recommendations put forward by this Panel in its Final Report on 'Locality Working from a Children's Services Perspective' regarding further assessment of demand and the number of Early Help workers assigned to the areas, be taken forward.
 - e) That the sustained efforts to increase the number of children being placed in an in-house foster placement be continued and that the targets established remain a key priority indicator for the service and performance be regularly reported to the Panel.
 - f) The Panel appreciates the challenges faced by the service in relation to the recruitment and retention of Foster Carers and the continuous efforts being made to increase in-house Foster Carer provision. It is recommended that additional feedback is sought from Foster Carers leaving Middlesbrough's Fostering Service to ensure that the information gained through the satisfaction surveys is fully utilised to focus on continuing improvement in this area.

- g) The Panel notes that there is currently very little advertising across the town to indicate that Middlesbrough Council needs and wants more people to become in-house foster carers. The Panel recommends that the work to increase the number of carers continues with pace and focus on additional advertising and marketing which should be analysed to improve awareness of the continuous need for more people to become in-house foster carers.
- h) The Panel appreciates that an essential strand to improving sufficiency is to continue to improve social work practice. It is acknowledged that numerous initiatives have been put in place to achieve this including the introduction of a Social Work Practice Model, a new Centre for Practice Excellence, the development of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, the work undertaken by the Future for Families Team, the commissioning of Innovate Teams and the effectiveness of the PAUSE project. However, whilst the Panel acknowledges improvements in the reduction of the use of Connected Carer Placements and Placements with Parents, it remains an area for improvement, and it is recommended that performance data is regularly presented to the panel in respect of these elements.
- i) The Panel recognises that particular progress has been made in strengthening the auditing process which provides a wide and in-depth coverage of the quality of services, however, a small proportion of social work practice continues to be identified as 'inadequate' through the audits. Whilst the Panel notes the continuing reduction in 'inadequate' practice, it recommends that increased focus is placed on addressing poor quality practice through increased management oversight, support, guidance and training identified as appropriate for individuals, as set out in the Children's Services improvement plan.
- j) The Panel would also reinforce that the day to day lived experience of the child should be at the heart of all social work practice and that this should be a key feature of learning and development to improve practice and a key part of the auditing process.
- k) That the improvement in the number of children being placed for adoption over the period 2018/19 (17) to 2020/21 (22) be continued alongside the improved focus on permanency planning.
- l) That progress against the set of seven proxy indicators with indicative targets based on statistical neighbour averages be reported to the panel and OSB on a quarterly basis.
- m) That mandatory training to provide a basic awareness of the Children's Social Care system, including information regarding key terms and phrases, be provided to all Council staff and Elected Members through the Middlesbrough Learns platform and that this be completed on an annual basis.
- n) That the local authority considers the use of certain terminology and acronyms that can be perceived as negative in relation to children in care/care leavers and that this be considered in conjunction with the young people themselves via the Children in Care Council, Care Leavers Forum and other participation routes.

- o) That the Participation Officer be asked to undertake a piece of work with children in care and care leavers through the various forums that have been established, to obtain their views around their experiences of the care system, what works well, what does not work well and to present their findings to the Panel and the Corporate Parenting Board.
- p) That opportunities are maximised to continually gather the views of children and young people in care, care leavers and their carers that can be used to shape and drive service improvement within the system.

Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

- 8. The rationale for the recommended decision is to improve placement availability, local sufficiency and permanency outcomes and how perceptions of children in our care can be improved. Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation by the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel, sixteen recommendations were made for consideration by Executive.

Other potential decision(s) and why these have not been recommended

- 9. For Executive to not approve the proposed actions detailed within appendix 3. This has not been recommended as the proposed action plan will support improvements in placement availability, local sufficiency and permanency outcomes and perceptions of children in our care.

Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Legal

- 10. All actions that are required as a result of the approval of these recommendations will be completed in accordance with relevant legislation including Statutory Guidance, "Working Together to Safeguard Children" which sets out the core legal requirements for Local Authorities and partner agencies and what they must do to keep children safe.

Strategic priorities and risks

- 11. These recommendations will directly support the delivery of the Council's Strategic Priorities.

Human Rights, Equality and Data Protection

- 12. Protected groups would not be adversely affected by this decision.

Financial

- 13. There is no proposed financial implications identified within the action plan. All actions will be completed within the current resources and budget.

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

Action	Responsible Officer	Date
To implement recommendations detailed within the action plan (appendix 3)	Rachel Farnham, Director of Children's Social Care	6 September 2022

Appendices

1	Final Report. Sufficiency and Permanency (Perceptions of Children in Care) dated 11 May 2022
2	Addendum to Final Report Sufficiency and Permanency (Perception of Children in Care) dated 11 May 2022
3	Report from the Children and Young Peoples Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel, Sufficiency and Permanency (Perception of Children in Care)' – Action Plan.

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date

Contact: Paula Jemson

Email: paula_jemson@middlesbrough.gov.uk

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MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

<p>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD 11 MAY 2022 FINAL REPORT CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE & SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL SUFFICIENCY & PERMANENCY (PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN IN CARE)</p>

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AIM OF THE INVESTIGATION

1. Children's Services in Middlesbrough has faced considerable challenges in recent times, more generally attributed to the numbers of children, young people and families requiring intervention. These challenges and pressures intensified following the Ofsted inspection of November and December 2019 and the Covid Pandemic.
2. Given such challenging circumstances the Panel was keen to examine placement availability, local sufficiency, permanency outcomes and how perceptions of children in care can be improved.

COUNCIL'S/MAYOR'S PRIORITIES

3. The scrutiny of this topic fits within the following priorities of the Council and Mayor:-
 - People – Children and Young People: "We will show Middlesbrough children that they matter and work to make our town safe and welcoming and to improve outcomes for all children and young people."
 - People – Vulnerability: "We will work to address the causes of vulnerability and inequalities in Middlesbrough and safeguard and support those made vulnerable."

COUNCIL'S THREE CORE AIMS

4. The scrutiny of this topic aligns with the Council's three core aims as detailed in the Strategic Plan 2020-2024¹:-
 - People – "Working with communities and other public services to improve the lives of our residents".
 - Place – "Securing improvements in Middlesbrough's housing, infrastructure and attractiveness, improving the town's reputation, creating opportunities for local people and improving our finances".
 - Business – "Promoting investment in Middlesbrough's economy and making sure we work as effectively as possible to support our ambitions for People and Place".

TERMS OF REFERENCE

5. The terms of reference for the Scrutiny Panel's investigation were as follows:-
 - a) **Children Looked After:-**
 - i) To examine and compare the profile of Middlesbrough's Children Looked After population against national and statistical neighbours.
 - ii) To examine placement types and performance.
 - b) **Foster Care:-**
 - i) To establish a profile of Middlesbrough's foster carers, including current recruitment and retention initiatives.
 - ii) To examine the availability of placements for Children Looked After in Middlesbrough.

¹ Middlesbrough Council's Strategic Plan 2020-24

- c) **Permanency:-**
 - i) To investigate the issues around permanency, including adoption, and
 - ii) To examine any initiatives and areas of best practice.
- d) **Perception:-**
 - i) To challenge people's perceptions of children in care.
 - ii) To create a better understanding of Children Looked After for everyone involved in the process.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 6. It is worth noting that the Scrutiny Panel's review took place over the course of the full Municipal Year 2020-21. Data within Children's Services is constantly changing but the information provided within the report was correct at the time it was provided. Whilst it is acknowledged that data has evolved since it was received by the Panel, the themes of the review remain the same.
- 7. Children and young people are taken into the care of the Local Authority when it is unsafe for them to remain in the family home or because their parents are unable to look after them due to a variety of reasons.
- 8. Statutory Guidance, "Working Together to Safeguard Children"² sets out the core legal requirements for Local Authorities and partner agencies and what they must do to keep children safe. The Statutory Framework³ sets out the legislation relevant to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This includes:-
 - The Children Act 2004
 - The Children Act 1989
 - The Children and Social Work Act 2017
 - Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011
 - Childcare Act 2006
 - Crime and Disorder Act 1998
 - Housing Act 1996
- 9. In addition, the Children and Social Work Act 2017 states that when a child or young person comes into care, the local authority becomes their 'corporate parent'. In short, this means that the local authority should:-
 - act in the best interests of the child - promoting health and wellbeing
 - encourage them to express their views and feelings and try to secure the best possible outcomes
 - ensure they have access to services
 - ensure they are safe, have stable homes, relationships and are in education/work
 - prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

² HM Government - Working Together to Safeguard Children (A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children) July 2018, updated December 2020.

³ HM Government – Working Together to Safeguard Children (Statutory Framework – legislation relevant to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children) July 2018.

10. As Corporate Parents, all Councillors have a responsibility to ensure that the Council is meeting these duties towards all children in its care and care leavers.
11. Throughout this report, a number of terms are used to describe the different types of care provided to children. Here is a summary of what the terms mean:-
- **Children Looked After** – A child is ‘looked after’ by a local authority if they are provided with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours; are subject to a care order or are subject to a placement order.
 - **Child in Need** - Defined under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 as ‘a child who is unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly impaired without the provision of children’s social care services, or the child is disabled’.
 - **Child Protection Plan** – A child becomes the subject of a child protection plan if they are assessed as being at risk of harm at an initial child protection conference. (Their plan should be reviewed within the first 3 months and then at intervals of not more than 6 months).
 - **Adoption** - The legal process of a child becoming a permanent member of a new family. Once an adoption order has been made, the child is no longer legally related to their birth family and parental responsibility passes to the adopter. This can only happen if a court orders it.
 - **Care Order** - An order granted by a court under section 31 of the Children Act 1989, placing a child in the care of a local authority. This requires the local authority to provide accommodation for the child, to maintain and safeguard them, to promote their welfare and to act in accordance with the other welfare responsibilities set out in the Children Act 1989. It gives the local authority parental responsibility for the child.
 - **Special Guardianship Order** - An order appointing one or more individuals to be a child’s ‘special guardian’. It is a private law order made under the Children Act 1989 and is intended for those children who cannot live with their birth parents and who would benefit from a legally secure placement.
 - **Supervision Order** - An order granted under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 placing the child under the supervision of a local authority. Under the order, the local authority must advise, assist and befriend the child. A supervision order can be made for a period of up to a year. This can be extended for any period not exceeding 3 years in total from the date of the first order.

Independent Review of Children’s Social Care

12. During the course of the Scrutiny Panel’s review, an Independent Review of Children’s Social Care was launched, led by Josh MacAlister.
13. The Panel heard that the over-arching question the review aimed to cover was “How can we ensure that children grow up in loving, safe and stable families and, where that is not possible, that care provides the same foundations?” Details on the scope of the review were provided, together with details of the themes and questions being addressed within the review. Panel Members were also informed of the ways in which they could contribute to the Calls for Advice and Calls for Evidence as part of the Review.

14. The Independent Review published its 'Case for Change' in June 2021 The Case for Change. The review document is a summary of the key issues in children's social care as it currently stands. Its key headings are:-
 - (a) we need to do more to help families;
 - (b) we need more effective support and decisive action that keeps children safe;
 - (c) the care system must build, not break, relationships; and
 - (d) change will not happen without addressing system causes.
15. Further feedback was sought in relation to the case for change and a summary of the responses was produced in October 2021 covering the main themes of the responses received.
16. Engagement events and consultation are continuing prior to the publication of the final report, which is expected to be published in 2022.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE GATHERED DURING THE REVIEW

TERM OF REFERENCE A – CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

a) To examine and compare the profile of Middlesbrough’s Children Looked After population against national and statistical neighbours

The National Picture - Latest Headline Information – 2019-2020⁴

17. The latest figures available from the Department for Education Statistics for Children Looked After in England spanned the period 31 March 2019 to 31 March 2020. As at 31 March 2020 the **number of children looked after** in England was **80,080** – this figure has increased by 2% on the previous year (year ending 31 March 2019). In total **30,970** children started being looked after in the year ending 31 March 2020 – down 3% on the previous year and **29,590** children ceased to be looked after in the year ending 31 March 2020 – similar to the previous year. The number of children who ceased to be looked after because they were adopted was **3,440** at year ending 31 March 2020. This was down 4% on the previous year. The rate per 10,000 children, aged 18 and under, who were looked after as at 31 March 2020 was **67**. This has increased from **65 per 10,000** the previous year.
18. The figures in England as at 31 March 2020 also show:-
- Almost half of children in care were aged 10-18 years old.
 - Around one-third of children coming into the care system were aged four or under.
 - Three in four children in care lived with foster carers.
 - One in ten children in foster care had three or more placements in a year.
 - Every year, approximately 12,500 young people leave care, aged 16 or above, to move into independence or semi-independence.

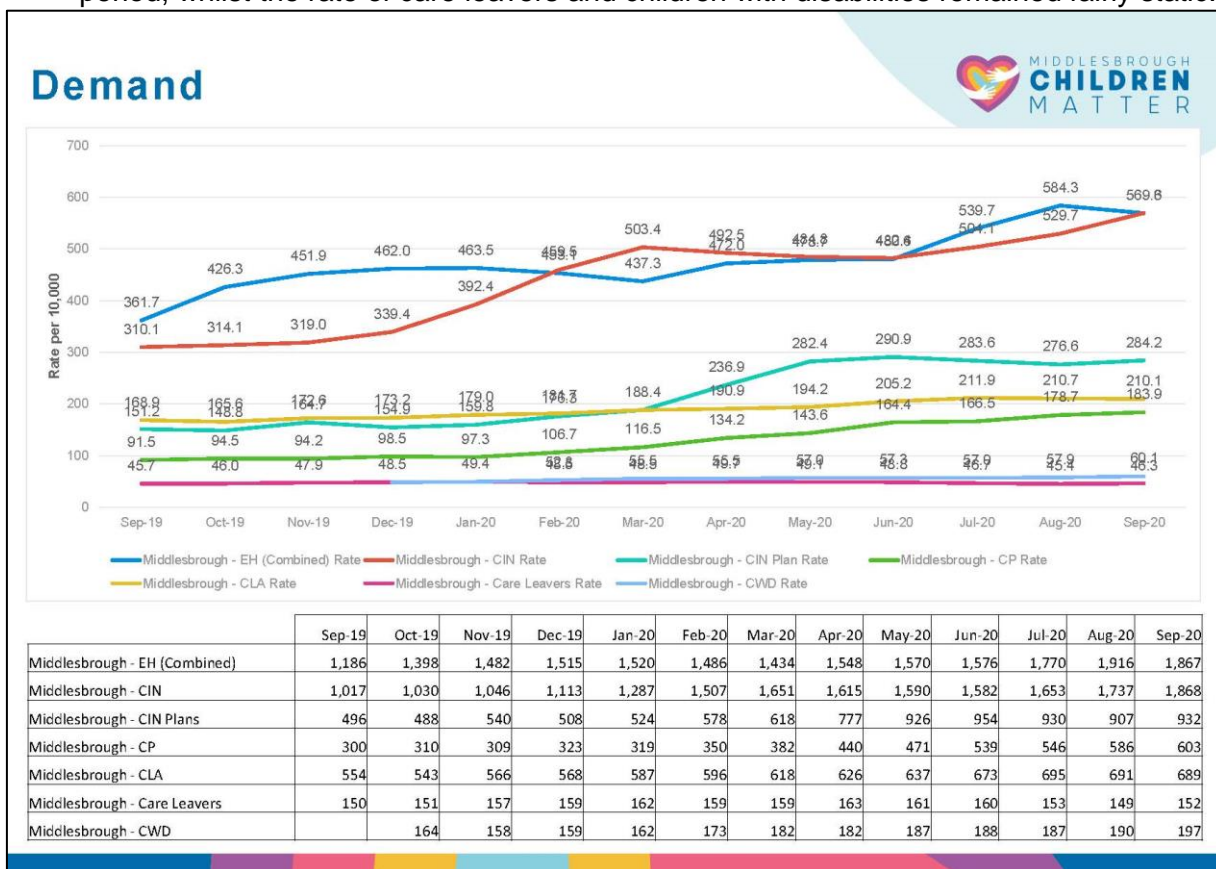
A Profile of Middlesbrough’s Children Looked After Population

19. The following information was provided in October 2020, as part of the Panel’s evidence gathering during the review.
20. In October 2020, Middlesbrough had **689** children looked after – equating to **210.1 per 10,000** population - which is the highest rate in the North East and the second highest rate nationally.
21. A breakdown of the numbers of children in Middlesbrough known to Children’s Services, by category, as at September/October 2020 is provided below:-

	September 2019	September 2020	% Change
Early Help (Combined)	1,186	1,867	↑ 57%
Children in Need (CiN)	1,017	1,868	↑ 84%
CiN Plans	496	932	↑ 88%
Child Protection	300	603	↑ 101%
Children Looked After	554	689	↑ 24%
Care Leavers	150	152	↑ 1%
Children with Disabilities	* 164 (* October 2019)	197	↑ 20%

⁴ DfE Statistics for Children Looked After in England year end 31 March 2020.

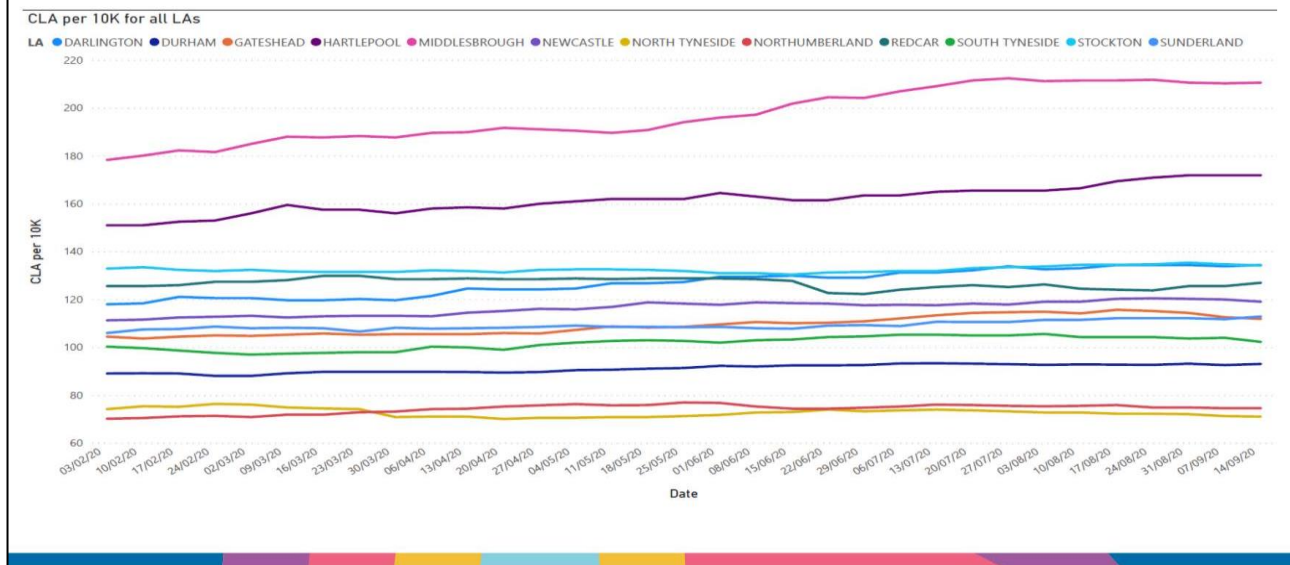
22. The graphic below illustrates the rates of children per 10,000 in Middlesbrough, who received various social care interventions between **September 2019 and September 2020**.
23. It shows that Early Help and Child in Need interventions had the highest rates per 10,000 and that rates of **Children Looked After** had risen from **168.9 to 210.1 per 10,000** during the one year period, whilst the rate of care leavers and children with disabilities remained fairly static.



24. When compared with **regional statistical neighbours**, as at September 2020, Middlesbrough had:-
- the **highest** rate of children looked after (aged under 18) per 10,000;
 - the **highest** rate of looked after children in the previous quarter;
 - the **highest** rate of children (per 10,000) ceasing to be looked after;
 - and the **lowest** rate of children looked after that moved to adoption.

25. The graphic below shows the numbers, per 10,000, of children looked after by each of the north east local authorities. Between 3 February and 14 September 2020, Middlesbrough had the highest rates.

Demand (4)



26. A regional comparison between the 12 north east local authorities of the rates of children looked after as at week commencing 16 March 2020 (start of the first lockdown) and the week commencing 5 October 2020 showed that only North Tyneside and Redcar and Cleveland had noted reductions in the number of children becoming looked after, per 10,000 population (14 and 8 children respectively). Whilst all authorities experienced an increase, Middlesbrough experienced the highest increase of 75 children.

Who are the children in Middlesbrough's care?

27. A profile of the 689 children classified as being looked after in Middlesbrough (as at October 2020), is set out below:-

Middlesbrough has 689 CLA (Oct 2020). This is a rate of 210.1 per 10,000 - the highest rate in the North East and the second highest rate nationally.

Age

The current ages of our CLA are:-

- 5.6% are aged under 1 year
- 21.4% are aged 1-4 years
- 23% are aged 5 to 9 years
- 35.4% are aged 10-15 years
- 14.5% are aged 16 years and over.
- 20 young people (3%) in care started their care episodes when they were 16 +
- 55 (8%) children in care over 10 years were brought into care when they were 5 years old or younger.
- 15.1% of children who become looked after are new-born, i.e. aged 0-1. (Greater than national trends).

Ethnicity

- 84.9 % of current CLA are White. This is an **over representation** against the school population at 78%.
- 6.1 % are mixed ethnicity in line with the school population (6%)
- 2.3 % are Asian. This is an **under representation** against the school population of 11%.
- 5.0 % are Black. This is an **over representation** against the school population of 2%.
- 0.9% are 'Other'. This is an **under representation** from the school population of 4%.

Geography

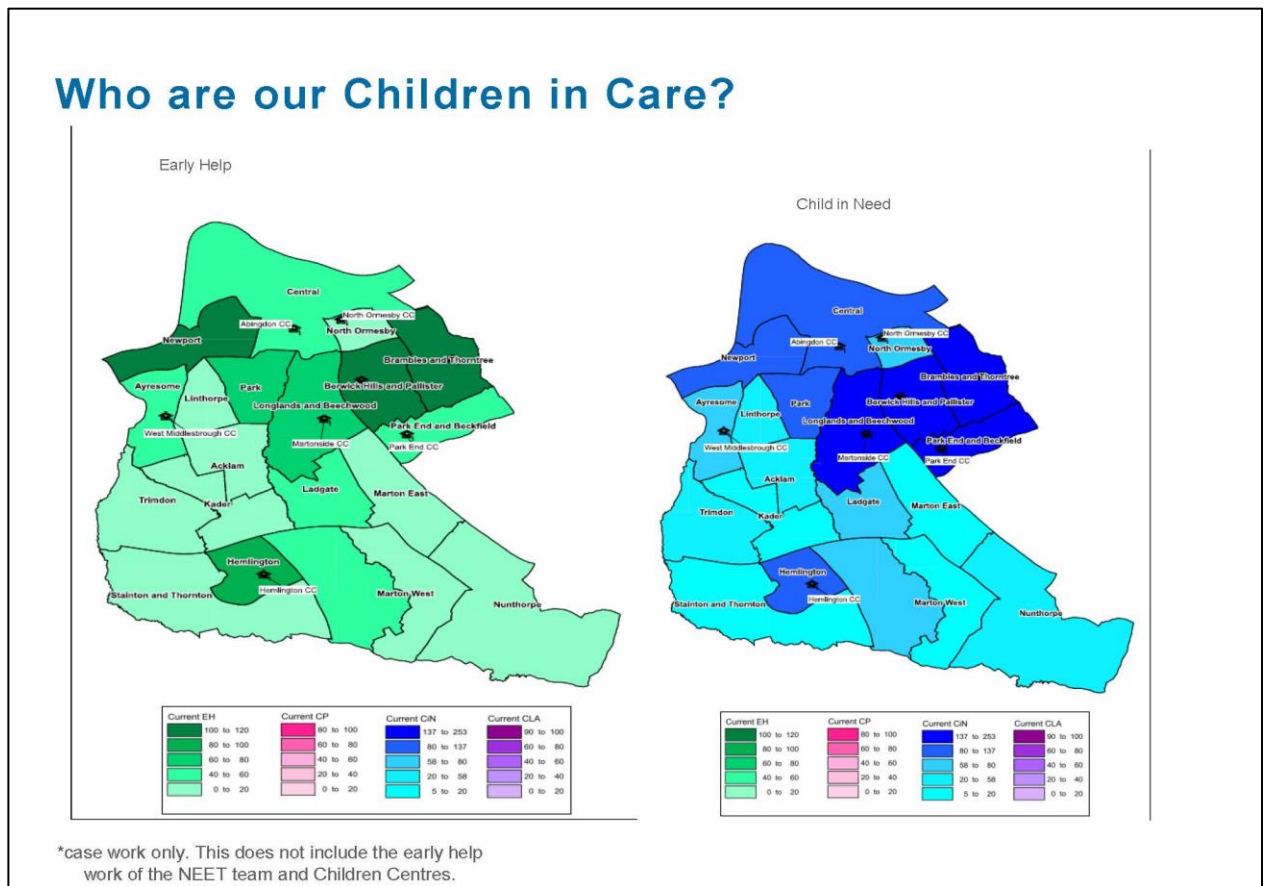
We have greater numbers of CLA from some of our wards. Although deprivation is a key factor in understanding our demand the way we work and safeguard in certain communities could also be a driver in understanding demand.

1 in 15 children are CLA in North Ormesby. Proportionately we do not work with families at a Child Protection threshold to the same level. Similar for Newport.

-North Ormesby: 3.9 children CLA for every child on a CP Plan.

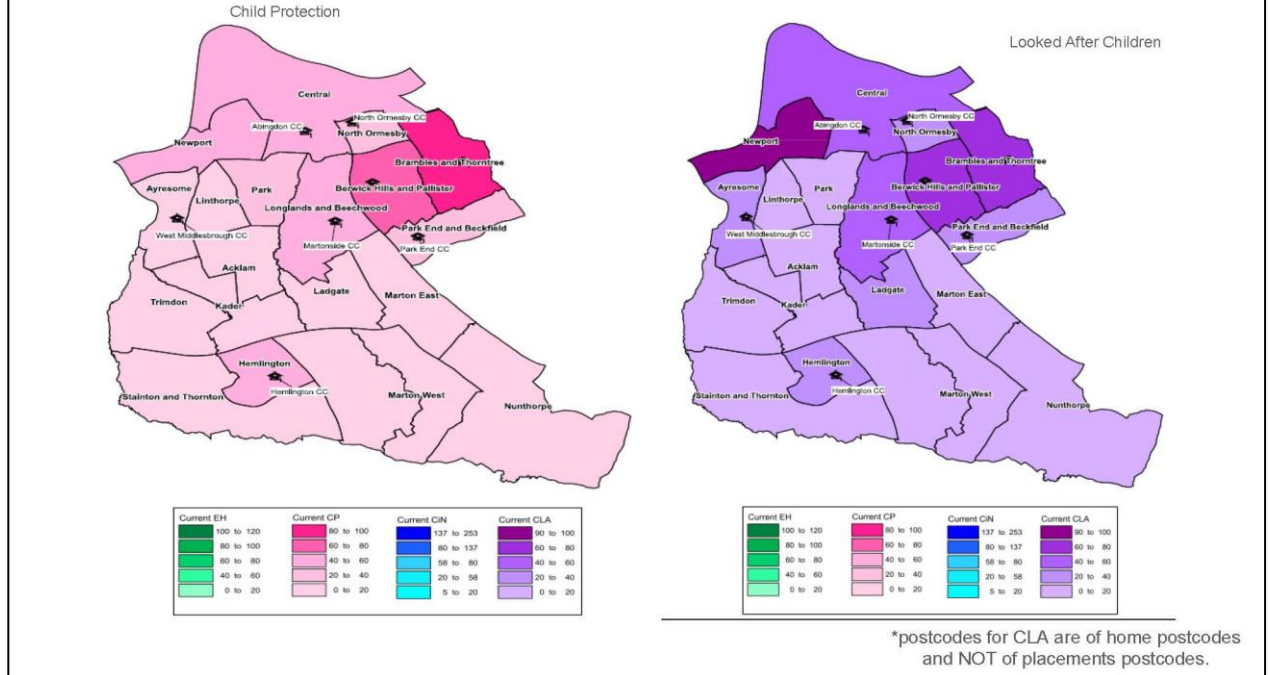
-Brambles and Thorntree 1.3 children CLA for every child on a CP Plan.

28. Between October 2019 and October 2020, 59 unborn children were the subject of Child Protection plans, all of whom went on to become looked after during the same period (between the ages 0-1 year).
29. Between April and October 2020, 27 out of 28 unborn children who were the subject of Child Protection Plans went on to become looked after started being looked after within the same six-month period, aged 0-1 year.
30. This initial data requires further analysis work but shows a significant proportion of children subject to pre-birth Child Protection Plans go on to become looked after between birth and one year. Around 20% of the children looked after cohort are aged one year and under. This figure appears **high** compared to regional and statistical comparators.



31. The maps above show a high level of need in Brambles and Thorntree as well as Berwick Hills and Pallister Wards. The nature of that need focusses around Early Help and Child in Need activity rather than Children Looked After activity.

Who are our children in care?

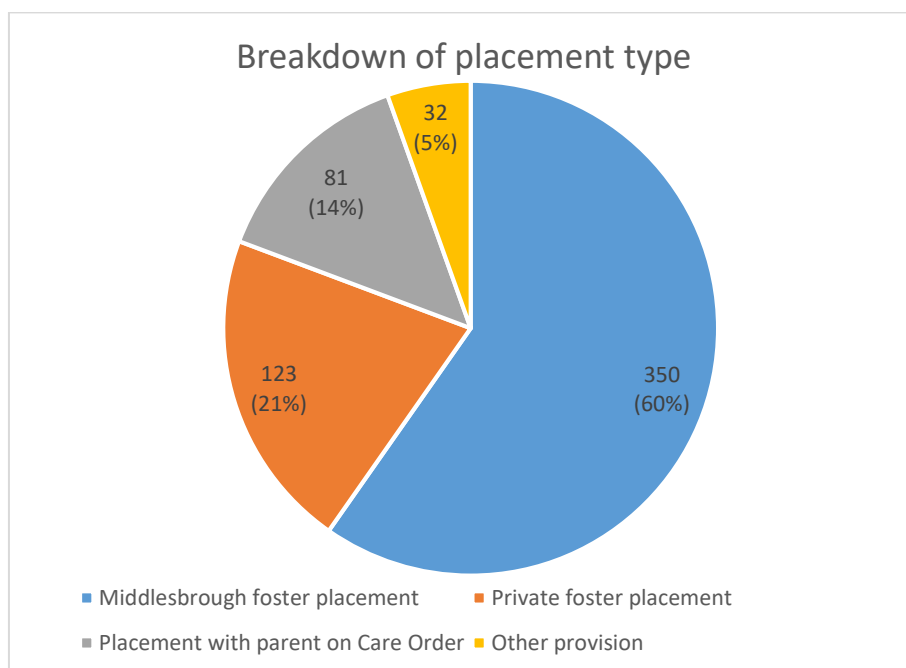


32. The area with highest Children Looked After interventions is Newport Ward which, conversely, is ranked fifth highest for Child Protection and Child in Need interventions.
31. Interestingly the maps show a gap in Child Protection provision in the more ethnically diverse Wards.
32. The Panel heard that of all Wards in Middlesbrough, North Ormesby - the most deprived Ward in Middlesbrough - has the greatest proportion of social work intervention per head of population for children. Indeed, around one in 17 children is Looked After.
33. Despite this, the local authority is doing comparatively little Early Help case work in North Ormesby. Identifying why this is the case requires further analysis, but it has been hypothesised that families arriving in North Ormesby are already at crisis point – with their level of need being too great for Early Help interventions.

TERM OF REFERENCE A - Children Looked After

b) Examine placement type and performance

34. As at October 2020, of the 689 children looked after in Middlesbrough, 505 were placed in foster placements and 81 lived at home with parents on a Full or Interim Care Order.

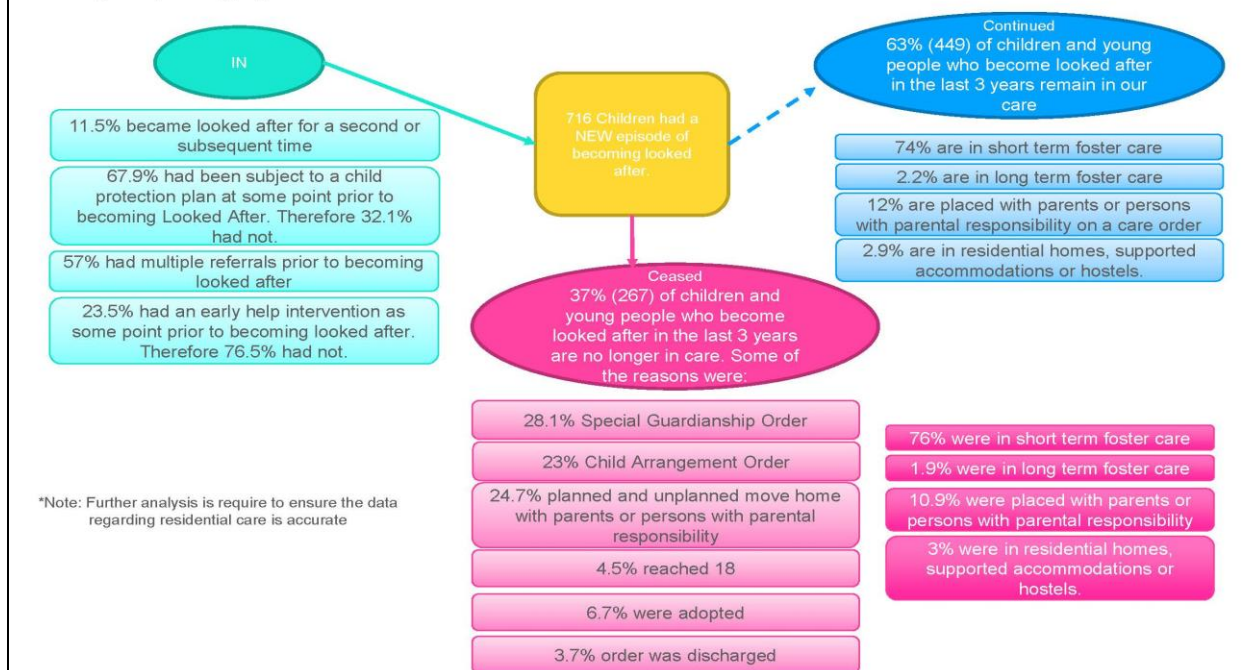


35. Those children living with parents on a Full Care Order are visited in the same way as a child subject to a Child Protection Plan, with oversight by the Court. Those subject to an Interim Care Order are kept under regular review and monitoring by the Court whilst the appropriate support and interventions are provided by Children's Services.
36. The graphic below aims to provide some understanding of the journey of 716 Middlesbrough children and young people who had a new episode of becoming looked after, and their individual outcomes, over a three-year period from April 2017 to June 2020.

Placements and planning

What is the journey of children and young people to care and where do they go?

An analysis spanning 3 years of children who became looked after

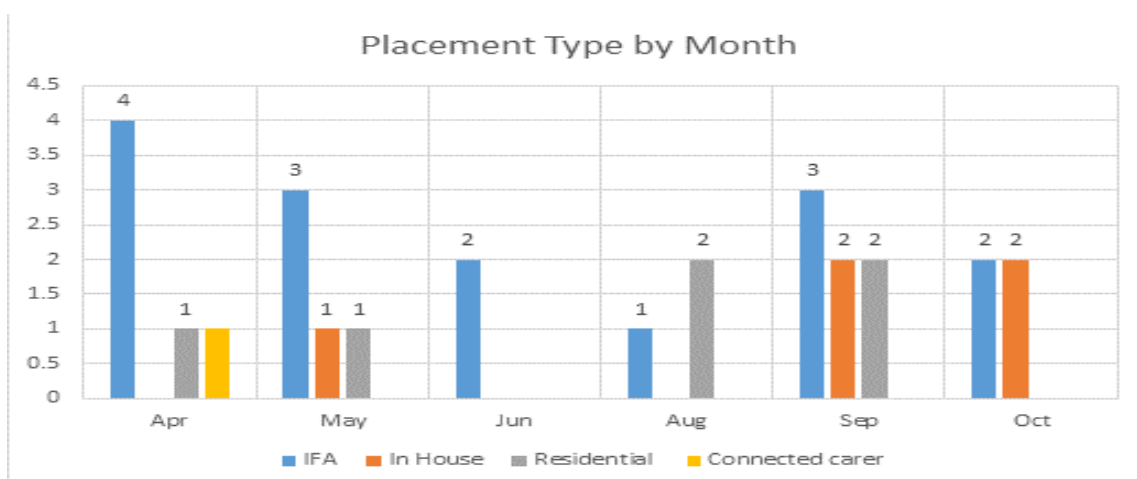


37. The Panel heard that in the six-month period up to October 2020, 70 children had ceased to be looked after. 41 of the 70 children were aged five and over, and six children achieved permanency through adoption.
38. Middlesbrough has improved performance in achieving permanence through adoption over the last five years, although the figure has reduced slightly over the last six month period.
39. During 2017-18 and 2018-19, Middlesbrough was similar to the England national average for adoption and also to statistical neighbours.
40. Further information in relation to adoption can be found at paragraph 67 of the report.

Placement Stability & Breakdowns

41. In terms of placement type and provision, data provided in November 2020 showed that 73% of Children Looked After in Middlesbrough lived in a foster placement, this included connected persons (kinship care) placements. This had increased from 69% the previous year (2018-19) and compared with 72% nationally and 71% with statistical neighbours.
42. There were 343 placements (52%) with in-house foster carers. This had increased from 42% the previous year (2018-19) and compared with 50% nationally and 59% with statistical neighbours. There were 125 private placements.
43. The Panel also heard that whilst recently published data showed 51% of Middlesbrough children were placed outside of the town, as at October 2020, 82% were placed within 20 miles of Middlesbrough with 18% being placed more than 20 miles away.

44. Placement stability is higher than the national average and statistical neighbours, with 64% (123) of children that had been looked after for two and a half years or more remaining in the same placement for two or more years. Although placements moves are sometimes due to a placement breaking down, there are also positive reasons for a move - such as a child being moved to an adoptive placement.
45. During the period October 2019 to October 2020:-
- 469 of Middlesbrough's Children Looked After were in their first and only placement
 - 147 children had experienced two placement moves
 - 49 had three placements
 - seven children had four placements
 - eight children had five placements
 - three children had six placements; and
 - no children had seven or more.
46. The graph below shows the numbers of placements, and placement type, that broke down during the period April to October 2020. In October, two in-house foster placements had broken down and two independent (external) foster placements had broken down. There was one connected persons placement breakdown during this six-month period.



47. Work to prevent placement breakdowns and improve placement stability included focussing on the support offer to fragile placements, the introduction of a placement disruption procedure, analysing data to understand the reasons why placements had ended, the LCS transformation to support improved performance reporting and social work practice, collaboration with Futures for Families, Innovate Teams and the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

TERM OF REFERENCE B – Foster Care

a) To establish a profile of Middlesbrough’s foster carers, including current recruitment and retention initiatives

b) to examine the availability of placements for Children Looked After in Middlesbrough.

48. All Local Authority Fostering Services and Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) are required to provide an annual dataset to Ofsted in relation to the numbers of approved foster carers and placements it has and also data relating to the types of foster care, registrations, de-registrations and a range of other subjects.
49. Government statistics⁵ for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, shows that IFAs have seen a net increase in capacity due to an additional **330** fostering households, creating **560** placements. In contrast, Local Authorities have seen a slight decrease in capacity with an additional **230** fostering households and **490** places.
50. Other key headlines in the national statistics for fostering in England 2019/20 are as follows (as at 31 March 2020):-
- It is estimated that there has been a 3% increase in the number of filled fostering places and a 13% decrease in the number of vacant places.
 - Of the total 71,150 approved foster carers, 65% were aged over 50 – with 25% being aged over 60.
 - Carers aged 20–39 had 67% of available places with children in them, whilst carers aged 55 and over had 62%. It would, therefore, appear that the older the carer, it was more likely that there would be a greater proportion of ‘not available’ places.
 - There were 14,995 fostering households registered within the IFA sector. Around half of these (7,652) are registered with IFAs that are owned by the six largest providers of IFA places in England. Therefore, the top six providers account for 51% of all IFA households, and 18% of fostering households nationally.
51. In 2019/20, the annual data return for Middlesbrough showed it had **141** approved foster carers offering **267** placements. By autumn 2020, the number of approved Foster Carers increased to **156**, however, the number of available placements decreased to **263**.
52. Whilst this indicates a net increase in approved foster carers, there is no increase in the number of placements available. Therefore, it is crucial to utilise placements as effectively as possible, with careful matching of children to placements.
53. The 156 approved foster carers are broken down into the following approval categories:-
- 89 - short term foster carers
 - 38 – fully approved connected persons carers
 - 17 - long term foster carers
 - 11 – respite care
 - 1 – fostering to adopt

⁵ Government Statistics - Fostering in England 2019/20 (main findings)

54. During 2019/20, a total of 41 new foster carers were approved in Middlesbrough. By September 2020, a further 22 new foster carers were approved. This supports the information regarding good conversion rates in Middlesbrough from the point of initial enquiry to approval.
55. In 2019/20, a total of 24 foster carers were de-registered (16 mainstream and 8 fully approved connected persons). This means that an approved foster carer resigned. Reasons for this included retirement, ill health, and other work commitments. By September 2020, a total of six foster carers were de-registered (two mainstream and four connected persons).
56. It is noted that during 2020 and January 2021, just one approved foster carer had been de-registered in order to take up fostering with an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA), however, during the same period, four IFA foster carers had deregistered with their IFA and were subsequently approved as Middlesbrough foster carers, citing the main reason for doing so as improved practice in Middlesbrough.
57. In 2019/20, **163** children were placed with in-house Middlesbrough foster carers. By September 2020, this number increased to **174**. This indicates that initiatives such as Innovate, bringing children from external placements back to Middlesbrough, and fostering recruitment drives were beginning to work.
58. As of September 2020, there was a total of 56 places not available for use. The figure was comparable with figures for 2019/20. Reasons for unavailable placements included: foster carers taking a break from fostering (such as ill health/personal reasons); needs of another child currently in placement; placement only available to sibling groups.
59. By January 2021, the number of 'on hold' foster carers increased to 22. This equated to 41 children not being able to be placed with in-house foster carers.
60. The Panel heard that 'on hold' carers are offered support back into fostering if they wish to continue and the support offer includes improved training and development, regular monthly consultation meetings and a foster carers Facebook page.
61. Feedback from foster carers leaving Middlesbrough's fostering service is sought via a Satisfaction Survey, although the Service acknowledges that further development of the survey is required.

Recruitment and Retention

62. During 2019/20, Middlesbrough received 123 initial enquiries in relation to fostering. This figure significantly reduced to 48 enquiries between April 2020 and January 2021. The reason for the reduction is understood to be predominantly due to Covid, however, Middlesbrough received a steady rate of enquiries regarding fostering that was comparable to most IFAs. The conversion rate from initial enquiry to the stage two assessment process is generally around 20% in Middlesbrough which is comparable or higher than other local authorities.
63. Of those 48 initial enquiries: 14 households (29%) were not progressed as the enquirer/applicant was deemed unsuitable by the Fostering Service; 20 (46%) households did not progress further due to enquirer/applicant's own choice and 14 (29%) households were open to the recruitment team.
64. The Fostering Service acknowledges that IFAs are at the forefront of recruitment strategies and is trying to utilise tried and tested practices such as the use of Google ads, various social media platforms and word of mouth to attract people to fostering in Middlesbrough.

65. In relation to gaps in Middlesbrough's fostering provision, the Panel heard that several areas had been identified, including: Parent and child placements; Sibling group placements and Teenage (11 plus) placements.
66. A recruitment campaign was set to go live in early 2021 which would attempt to appeal to potential carers who may be able to fill those gaps. In addition, a team of Independent Social Workers has been recruited in order to specifically complete Form F assessments of foster carer applicants that would hopefully be generated by the campaign.

TERM OF REFERENCE C– PERMANENCY

- a) To investigate the issues around permanency, including adoption.

67. Permanence is defined in the statutory guidance that accompanies the Children's Act 1989 as providing children with "*a sense of security, continuity, commitment, identity and belonging ... with a secure, stable and loving family to support them through childhood and beyond.*"⁶
68. Permanency for children can be achieved in a number of ways:-
- **Long Term Fostering** – Where a child is placed permanently with foster carers. The child is subject to a Care Order. Birth parents retain parental responsibility together with the local authority, however, the local authority's parental responsibility carries greater weight than that of the birth parents. Foster carers do not have parental responsibility.
 - **Adoption** – A Court Order. Parental responsibility is removed from the birth parents and transferred to the adoptive parents.
 - **Special Guardianship Order** – A Court Order. Birth parents share parental responsibility with the special guardian and the special guardian's parental responsibility carries greater weight than that of the birth parents.
 - **Child Arrangement Order** – An Order stating where, and with whom, a child will live, who they will spend time with and who they will have contact with. The decisions are made in the best interests of each child on an individual basis.
 - **Long Term Residential** – Where a young person is placed permanently in a children's residential home. The young person may be subject to a Care Order (or a 'Section 20' agreement), where the birth parents have parental responsibility but the local authority does not.
 - **Return/Remain at Home** – When a child or young person returns home where it is safe to do so, or is able to remain at home with birth parents.
69. Ofsted's report⁷ following its inspection of Middlesbrough's Children's Services in November/December 2019 stated:-
- *'Early permanence is not prioritised for children in Middlesbrough and there is a lack of parallel planning which creates delay in achieving stability'. (Para 15).*
 - *'The lack of parallel planning creates delay for most children in achieving permanence'. (Para 14).*
 - *'Delays in achieving permanence are not sufficiently challenged by Independent Reviewing Officers' (Para 19).*
 - *'Some children, including very young children, have experienced too many changes in placement before their permanent placement is identified. (Para 23).*
 - *'Children experience significant delay in securing permanence through adoption. Currently there are not enough adopters for children who are waiting' (Para 25).*

Sufficiency of Placements

70. The issue relating to placement sufficiency is whether or not Middlesbrough has enough placements, or access to enough placements, to meet the individual needs of the children and young people in Middlesbrough's care and if not what is being done to meet their needs.
71. The definition of 'sufficiency' in the Oxford English Dictionary is 'the condition or quality of being adequate or sufficient'; 'an adequate amount of something, especially of something essential'.

⁶ The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations: Vol. 2 – June 2015 - DfE

⁷ Ofsted Inspection on Middlesbrough Children's Social Care Services 25/11/19 – 06/12/19 (published 24/01/20)

72. In 2010, the Government published statutory guidance⁸: “Sufficiency – Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children”. This document sought to improve outcomes for children looked after and young people by providing guidance on the implementation of section 22G of the Children Act 1989 (‘the 1989 Act’) – requiring local authorities to take reasonably practicable steps to secure sufficient accommodation within the authority’s area which meets the needs of those children and within their area (the ‘sufficiency duty’).

73. The Ofsted inspection report highlighted:-

‘The large number of older children and adolescents in care has reduced placement choice. (Para 14).

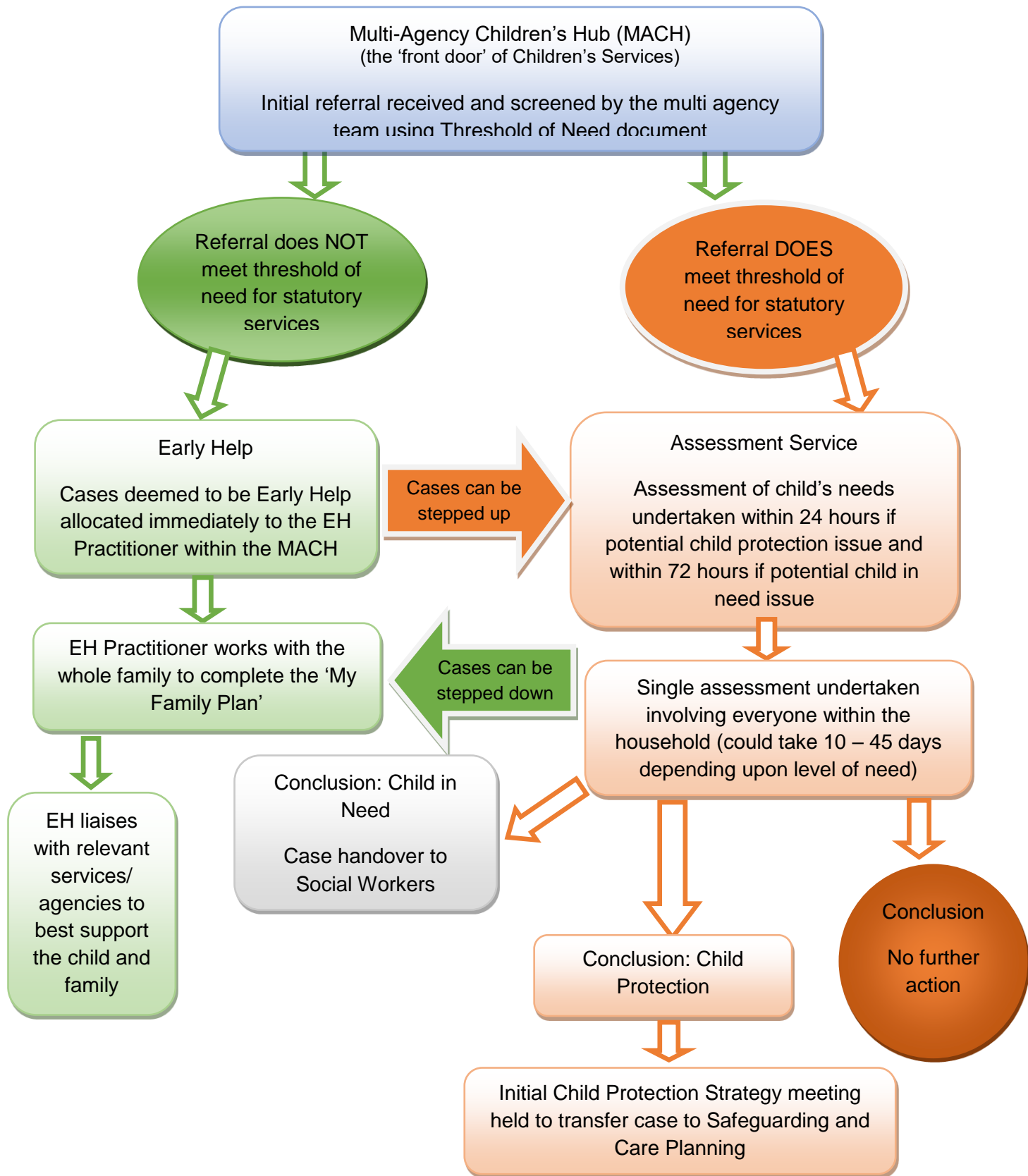
74. The Panel heard that Children’s Services planned to reduce the numbers of high cost external placements by shifting the balance to more preventative and edge of care work, whilst strengthening commissioning of placements and support for children and young people. Another essential strand to improving sufficiency is to improve social work and permanency practice.

Understanding the Child’s Journey - A Pathway through Care

75. In order to gain a better understanding of the care system and processes from the child’s perspective, the Panel received a presentation from the Directors and Heads of Service within Children’s Services who used a fictitious family as an example case study, detailing each stage of the process from the point of initial referral up to leaving care.

76. A flow chart is provided below to demonstrate a summary of this process and details of each part of the service are provided at Appendix 1.

⁸ Sufficiency – Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children (March 2010)



Adoption

77. Adoption Tees Valley (ATV) was established in 2018, in line with the Government's aim to see all local authorities with adoption responsibilities participate in Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) by 2020. The key drivers for this were that children were waiting too long to be adopted and to improve adoption support and outcomes for adopted children, whilst increasing the 'pool' of available adopters at regional levels.
78. ATV is the Regional Adoption Agency for the five Tees Valley Local Authorities of Middlesbrough, Stockton, Hartlepool, Darlington and Redcar and Cleveland and is responsible for: the recruitment, assessment and approval of adoptive families; receiving referrals of children for adoption; family finding; matching and placing the children with suitable, approved adopters; provision of adoption support; facilitating letterbox contact between adopted children and their birth families; life story books; step parent adoptions.

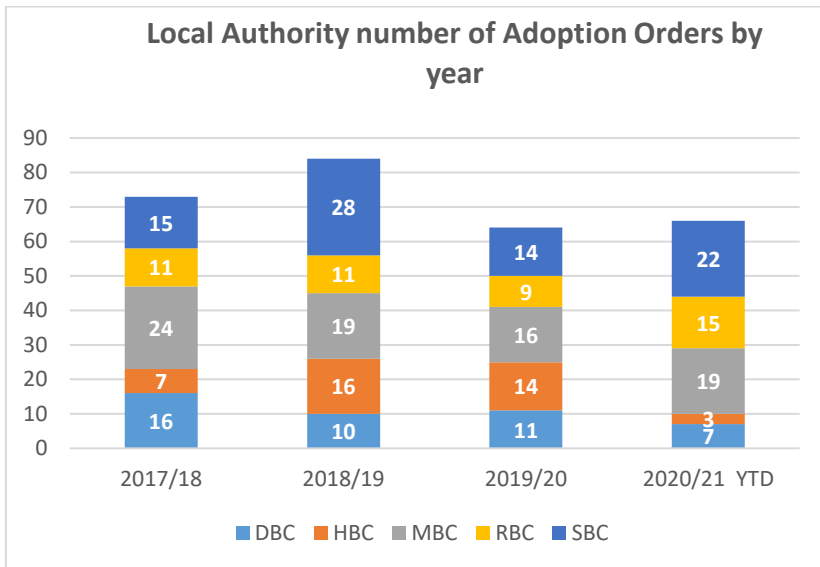
Recruitment of adopters

79. The recruitment process, from the point of initial enquiry to formal notification to proceed with an application, takes an average of 101 days with ATV. Whilst this first stage exceeds ATV's own target of 60 days, it is shorter than the England average of 112 days.
80. The second stage of the process includes thorough assessments of potential adopters being undertaken by ATV Adoption Social Workers and, if deemed suitable, presentation to the ATV Family Placement Panel for a recommendation as to their suitability to adopt. The recommendation is then presented to the Agency Decision Maker for a final decision. Timescales for the second stage take, on average, an additional 129 days – slightly longer than ATV's target of 121 days, but shorter than the England average of 140 days. There is a fast-track process for applicants who have previously adopted, or who are already approved foster carers, with the whole process taking around 121 days (four months) in total.
81. During 2019/20 a total of 50 adopters were approved and as at the end of December 2020, an additional 45 adopters were approved, with a further 39 in the process of being assessed.
82. 71% of ATV approved adopters waited at least three months from the point of approval to being matched with a child which indicates that a relatively high number of adopters are matched quickly.
83. ATV has a dedicated Marketing Officer to support recruitment of adoptive parents. There is an ongoing social media presence as this method, together with anonymised profiling of children, has been identified as being a successful mechanism for recruitment. ATV has a significant social media reach, with over 7,000 facebook followers.
84. ATV works closely with the National Adoption Recruitment Steering Group and national campaigns. This group is centrally funded by DfE to impact on the numbers of children who are waiting to be adopted.
85. In 2020 ATV's recruitment campaign specifically focussed on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) children, who are identified as waiting the longest, and undertook regional work to promote national messaging, with profiles of its BAME adopters and social workers who presented as "the face of ATV". This resulted in ATV recruiting two further BAME families.
86. Additionally, ATV is undertaking work to promote the need for adopters of siblings as this is one of the biggest areas of need for the adoption service in the Tees Valley.

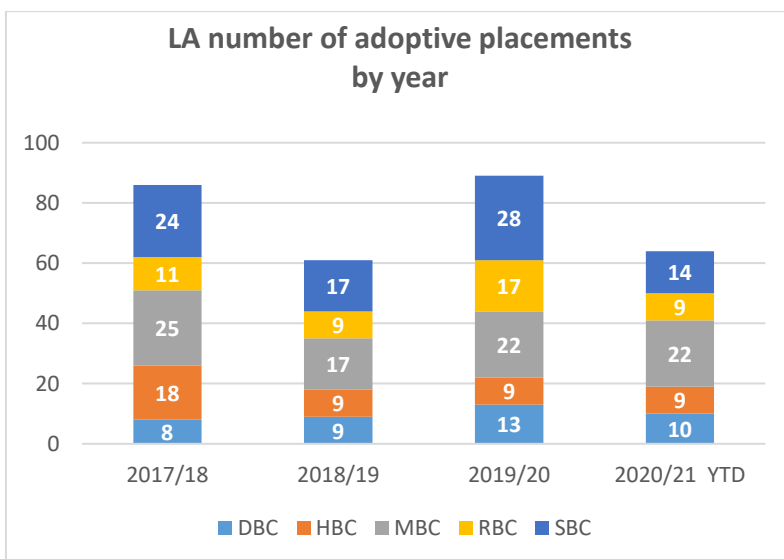
87. To support sufficiency, ATV has engaged in regional collaborative work with Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs) and there is now a Regional protocol which is supported and signed up to by regional VAA's and RAA's. This aims for regionally approved adopters to be available to regional RAA's. As of the end of quarter 3 in 2020/21, ATV placed 15 children with regional VAA's, where external placements were required.

Children and Placements

88. In terms of timescales for children who are waiting to be adopted, the Panel heard that the Government target from the point of a child entering care to having their plan for adoption approved is **183** days. This target is not being met nationally. As at Q3 2020/21 the national average is **245** days, however, all of the Tees Valley local authorities, including Middlesbrough (**217** days) are performing better than the national average (based on data provided by the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB)).
89. Once a Placement Order (PO) is achieved, the Government sets a target of **121** days from granting of a PO to matching a child with adopters. This is a particularly challenging timescale influenced by the matching characteristics and needs of the child and the numbers of available adopters.
90. In Middlesbrough the PO to match timescale averages **192** days and was better than the national average (**216** days) and the RRA average of **217** days. Middlesbrough's figure has reduced over several months up to April 2021. This improvement is partly attributed to Middlesbrough establishing a tighter performance monitoring system for social workers and introducing a monthly Permanence Monitoring Group, chaired by a senior manager, making decisions more quickly to reduce delay.
91. In addition, practice is improving in providing information to ATV to assist with family finding for children as good information sharing processes are critical to the timely achievement of a placement. Early permanence has been promoted through strategic work between ATV and Middlesbrough, including:-
- The appointment of a Permanence Champion by ATV – responsible for tracking and monitoring all cases from early notification onwards. Sharing of better quality information in a timely way enables ATV to potentially identify a suitable adoptive family, pre-Placement Order, so that the match can be scheduled and progressed quickly following the grant of a PO by the Court.
 - Workforce development to provide a better understanding of how to create an adoption plan. ATV supported this through a dedicated early permanence training workshop to Middlesbrough Social Workers and through further workshops at Middlesbrough's Practice Week.
92. Once the child is placed for adoption, the Placement to adoption order (AO) granted date is better than the Government target, and is better than the England average, and RAA average, based on the current data return.
93. The graph below shows that the number of Adoption Orders across the ATV region increased from a total of **64** in 2019/20 to **66** as at the end of Quarter 3 in 2020/21 and was expected to increase further to the end of the year. Middlesbrough's Adoption Orders increased from **16** in 2019/20 to **22** as at end of quarter 3 2020/21. This is reflective of increased focus within Middlesbrough on progressing permanency plans for children.



94. The graph below shows that in 2019/20, a total of **89** children were placed with adopters across the ATV region and **64** were placed with adopters as at the end of Q3 2020/21. The numbers of Middlesbrough children placed in adoptive placements is rising, from the lowest number – **17** - in 2018/19, to **22** in 2019/20 and **22** as at the end of Q3 2020/21. This shows improvement on the numbers of children being placed for adoption, and improved focus on permanency planning.



95. Timescales in respect of placements, from the point of the child coming into the care of the local authority, to being placed with their adoptive family, averaged **455** days nationally in 2019/20 and **498** days across ATV in 2019/20. Middlesbrough has a higher figure than the other Tees Valley Local Authorities which is reflective of Middlesbrough having more children who had waited longer to be placed. This included sibling groups and older children who tended to wait longer to be matched with adoptive families.

96. The national trend in 2019/20 saw a drop in the numbers of children being adopted, however, across the ATV region, numbers had increased – with **91** children being adopted. The reasons for this could be that the ATV region has a higher rate of children looked after, with a regional average of 150.5 per 10,000 population compared with 67 per 10,000 England average. As at the end of quarter three in 2020/21, Middlesbrough’s average was 189 per 10,000.

97. As at quarter three 2020/21, the numbers of children across the Tees Valley with and agreed plan of adoption and with a Placement Order had significantly reduced year on year from 2019/20. However, up to Q3 2020/21 placement numbers are slightly lower than previous years – which was also the national picture - and Adoption Orders are comparable.
98. Active tracking of children progressing through care planning indicates that there continues to be a higher number of children for whom the local authority is planning adoption.
99. Published data from the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB) up to Q3 2020/21 (over a 12 month period rolling average), shows that of **69** children adopted during this period, **51** are identified as being in the harder to place category. This includes: Being part of a sibling group; Being age 5+; Being a child with a disability; BAME. 73% of children placed via ATV and adopted in this period are deemed “hard to place.”
100. As at April 2021, Middlesbrough had five children - aged 5 and over - and five sibling groups adopted within the last year, including two sibling groups of three. 15 out of 25 children adopted in the 12 months (April 2020 to April 2021) were considered to be in the ‘hard to place’ category.
101. Some children, especially those who are older, will require more time to be prepared for adoption. It is important for family finding to select the right family who are well-prepared for taking that child/children.
102. The Panel heard that some of the key challenges for ATV are:-
 - Sufficiency of adopters for children with more complex needs (including siblings, older children and BAME children).
 - Volume of life-story work and obtaining information to produce meaningful life story books.
 - Waiting times for post-adoption support.
 - Volume and management of the post-box adoption contact service.
 - Step parent adoptions.

TERM OF REFERENCE C – PERMANENCY

b) To examine any initiatives and areas of best practice.

103. Various workstreams are ongoing to address the issue of placement sufficiency and to strengthen permanency. Below, is an overview of some of that work:-

Corporate Parenting Strategy – Permanency and Sufficiency Strategies

104. On 16 March 2021, the Council's Executive ratified the Corporate Parenting Strategy. The Strategy sets out the Council's vision and action plan for how the Council and its partners will support the children in its care, and care leavers, to achieve the best possible outcomes in their lives.
105. Both the Permanency and Sufficiency Strategies have been revised and now sit within the overarching Corporate Parenting Strategy. Each element was shaped by the voice and participation of children and young people in Middlesbrough.
106. The main purpose of the Permanency Strategy is to "ensure that all children and young people in our care are growing up in stable, secure, safe and nurturing living arrangements, and are supported in a positive transition to independence and adult life. This is reflected in our social work practice, and in our systems, processes and partnerships for permanency. The provocations (strong prompts) from our Futures for Families programme provide a critical reference point for us as we strive to improve the quality and impact of our permanence arrangements for children and young people in Middlesbrough."
107. The purpose of the Sufficiency Strategy, or Sufficiency Plan, is to "set out a clear framework of for how we will work with our partners across Middlesbrough and the surrounding area to secure the best possible range of placement opportunities and support services for our children in care and our care leavers."
108. The Corporate Parenting Strategy recognises the progressive increase in the proportionate balance of spend on support for children in care, and the increasing proportion of children presenting with acute and complex needs illustrates the scale of challenge as children's services forward-plans and forecasts. To meet this business-critical challenge a clear three-pronged approach was established:-
- To improve social work and permanency practice
 - To strengthen the coherence and impact of sufficiency and commissioning arrangements
 - To progressively rebalance resources towards prevention and support for children and young people on the edge of care.

Improving Social Work Practice

109. The Panel heard that improving Social Work practice is central to supporting better outcomes for children and young people and securing permanency outcomes. Subsequently, Middlesbrough has developed a Social Work Practice Model, in conjunction with the workforce – 'Children and Relationships First'. The practice model is a key component of the improvement journey and builds on regional and national innovation in Children's Services.
110. Children's Services has introduced a new Centre for Practice Excellence which supports the practice model as well as a co-ordinated approach to driving innovation and best practice across the whole system of support for children and young people, including permanence arrangements. It offers tools and resources to support the practice model, workforce development to ensure staff have the skills and knowledge they need to deliver commitments to local children and young people and quality assurance arrangements and opportunities to share and develop best practice.

111. The Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out, in detail, the social work practice pathway for achieving permanence in Middlesbrough, providing a reference point for professional practice and decision-making. In summary, by considering the most appropriate options available via Early Help, Entry to Care, Forever Families and Futures for Families, a clear pathway to achieving permanence for children and young people is considered, as follows:-
- Where safe and achievable, every attempt will be made to support the child to remain at home with their family – the Futures for Families Programme will drive innovation and best practice in this area of work.
 - Where it is necessary for a child or young person to leave home, the first consideration will be to find suitable accommodation with family or close adult friends.
 - A child or young person will only ever remain in care for the shortest possible period needed in order to manage a safe return home.
 - If safe to do so, a robust plan will be put in place with the child/young person and their family to support a return home.
 - If it is not possible to return home, early plans will be made for a suitable alternative placement.
 - Permanence will always be secured through the most appropriate legal order to meet the child/young person's needs.
 - Where it is not possible/appropriate for the child/young person to remain within their family network, alternative permanent carers will be identified. This may be through Adoption, Long-Term Foster Care, Child Arrangement Order or a Special Guardianship Order.
 - If an older child wants to live independently, and assessments suggest this is suitable, a plan to achieve this will be developed with the young person.

Initiatives/Best Practice

112. Some of the ways in which the local authority is trying to address the numbers of children coming into care and to ensure that those in care were placed locally were through the following initiatives.

Futures for Families

113. In 2019, the Government announced that, as part of its 'Strengthening Families Protecting Children Programme' (SFPC), it would be investing £84 million over five years to support 20 local authorities to improve work with families and reduce the number of children entering care.
114. The Programme would support the selected local authorities to deliver one of three children's social care innovation programme projects in their own area.
115. Middlesbrough was subsequently successful in being selected as the Trailblazer authority for the 'No Wrong Door' programme and awarded funding to deliver the programme in Middlesbrough, in partnership with North Yorkshire.
116. No Wrong Door had operated successfully in North Yorkshire offering an integrated service approach to support adolescents with complex needs. Working in hubs, it brings together a range of housing options, services and outreach support under one management team, meaning that a young person's needs can be addressed within a single team.
117. North Yorkshire had worked with Middlesbrough to develop a bespoke Service which was launched in September 2020 in Middlesbrough as Futures for Families.

118. Based on North Yorkshire's 'No Wrong Door' model, and with assistance from North Yorkshire Children's Services, Middlesbrough developed its own bespoke service - 'Futures for Families' - which launched in September 2020.
119. Operationally, *Futures for Families* operates from Thorntree Hub, providing rapid response to children and families in crisis who need support to prevent family breakdown. The multi-disciplinary team based at the Hub offers 'edge of care' support to prevent a young person at risk of coming into care, and also provides support to children and families in 'fragile' placements via specific planned work and residential respite, where needed. The aim is to help families stay together, safely, and to provide positive futures for young people.
120. From its launch in September 2020 up to the start of December 2020, Futures for Families was providing edge of care support to a total of 39 young people in fragile placements and regular in-reach support to a total of 15 young people.
121. An initial impact study carried out by Innovate and North Yorkshire Council, based on the care experiences of 40 young people – showed that many of the young people identified that they had struggled with the transition from primary to secondary school. This has resulted in Futures for Families offering support for children aged 11-25 rather than 12-25 in order to provide school transition support. The outcomes of the study have helped to inform improved practice across Social Work Teams.
122. Of the total number of young people accessing support from Futures for Families:-
 - 75% receive support from the Life Coach, either directly or indirectly.
 - 92% had no previously identified need.
 - 32.5% had a previously undiagnosed speech and language difficulty – 95% of which were male.
123. Data activity on each type of intervention shows that building relationships and emotional and mental health support are the highest support provision streams.
124. Futures for Families also supports young people who go missing from care. Between November 2020 and November 2021, 94 recorded missing episodes were attributed to 11 young, however, due to targeted outreach work, there was a reduction of between 50 and 100% in missing episodes and 36% had experienced no further missing episodes since receiving support from Futures for Families.
125. As at December 2020, Futures for Families was supporting nine young people to return to their families or a connected persons/foster placement from expensive residential placements.

Innovate

126. Placement data has shown that long term permanence is not achieved quickly enough; too many children are placed on Care Orders with parents; too many children were in residential care and not enough were placed with Middlesbrough Council employed foster carers; Special Guardianship Orders were not used often enough as a permanency option; and not enough children are being adopted.
127. In response to some of these issues, a managed team of Social Workers – Innovate – was commissioned in July 2020 in order to progress 90 children subject to Care Orders. The aim is to improve outcomes for children and to reduce the numbers of children looked after in Middlesbrough

by providing permanence; placement stability and support from residential placements back into family life.

128. The Team works with four key cohorts:-

- Children in residential placements.
- Children placed with parents where the discharge of a Care Order is required.
- Children living with a Connected Persons Foster Carer where the plan is to progress to a Special Guardianship Order.
- Children living with a Foster Carer where support is needed to prevent the placement breaking down and a future move.

129. During a relatively short period of time, from July 2020 to December 2020, the impact of the work undertaken by the Innovate Team is notable. For example, of 19 children in external residential placements, 17 were assessed as suitable to be moved (having had their assessments and care plans fully reviewed). Six of the 17 children were moved closer to Middlesbrough – either rehabilitated back home (3) or in foster care placements (3) and the remaining 11 had either a definite or anticipated moving date⁹.

130. Ten children were subject to Care Orders whilst placed with parents, all of which were subject to court proceedings. However, the work of Innovate meant that as at December 2020 three had their Care Orders revoked with the remainder expected to be revoked imminently. In all cases the children cease to be 'looked after' once the Care Order is discharged.

131. Intensive intervention was also undertaken with 16 children in fragile placements where a breakdown would have resulted in a further move or an escalation to residential care. However, all 16 are being successfully maintained in their current placements.

132. 45 of the cohort of 90 children were placed in Connected Persons Foster Care placements. The Innovate Team had assessed and worked with those children and families to achieve the following outcomes:-

- Three children rehabilitated back home and a further six were in the process of being rehabilitated back home due to sustained changes made by parents.
- 22 children were actively moving down the Special Guardianship Order pathway.
- 14 children were subject to further negotiations and planning with possible guardians, with nearly all expected to go ahead.

133. There are also financial benefits to the Innovate Team's work. In terms of moving young people closer to Middlesbrough and within the Council's Foster Care network approximate cost reductions of £797,000 per year, based on four young people, were realised whereas preventing a move to residential care resulted in a cost avoidance of approximately £2,881 per child. Reductions in the length of time spent in care resulted in a cost avoidance of approximately £189 per child per week.

PAUSE

⁹ The remaining two children in external residential placements were in their final year of secondary school and it was considered not appropriate to move them whilst in their GCSE year.

134. Pause is a national charity that works with women who have experienced, or are at risk of, repeat removals of children from their care. Through an intensive programme of support, it aims to break the cycle of repeat removals and give women the opportunity to reflect, tackle destructive patterns of behaviour and to develop new skills and responses that can help them create a more positive future. Pause aims to prevent the damaging consequences of thousands more children being taken into care.
135. The North East Pause project has been running successfully in the Tyne and Wear region since 2016 and recently extended into Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton (with contracts in place in Middlesbrough since August 2020).
136. Nationally, Pause operates 30 practices across 39 local authorities and works with around 344 women who have had 1,052 children removed collectively. On average, each woman receiving support has had between three and four children removed, although this is much higher in some cases.
137. Details of the work undertaken by Pause can be found on their website (<https://www.pause.org.uk/>), but in general terms Pause Practitioners typically work with six to eight women, building a secure, consistent relationship which helps to focus on each woman's needs and encourages them to work towards a more positive future. They do this using a range of group activities, day trips and drop in sessions on matters including healthy cooking on a budget and crafts.
138. Such activities help to build self-esteem, reduce social isolation, and manage loss through reducing the stigma of child removal through peer support, shared experience, and role modelling positive behaviours and trying new things.
139. Following an initial 16-week engagement phase, women are asked to commit to a pause in pregnancy should they choose to commence the Pause Programme, with appropriate support mechanisms and services in place.
140. During the course of this review, Pause found 162 women were eligible for support in Middlesbrough and the details of 18 women considered at risk of repeat pregnancies, and subsequent removal of the child, were forwarded by Children's Services.
141. Pause is commissioned to work with **10** women in Middlesbrough, who have had a total of **28** children removed from their care (an average of three children per woman). The women range in age from **23 to 41 years** (the average age being 28 years). **22%** of the women have **care experience**. Further details of the women engaged with Pause can be found at Appendix 2.
142. To enhance their service, Pause is continuing to build effective partnerships with a range of organisations including:-
- Impact Teesside (grief and loss group for women on the Pause programme due to start in August 2021)
 - My Sister's Place
 - Virgin Care Sexual Health Services
 - Adoption Tees Valley (frontline partnership working)
 - Middlesbrough Adult Safeguarding (frontline partnership working)

143. The effectiveness of the Pause Programme was reviewed by the Department for Education following an evaluation carried out by the University of Sussex, Research in Practice and Ipsos Mori. The evaluation's findings, published in November 2020, found:-

“The Pause Programme is effective in making a positive difference in women’s lives, improving their relationships with children, reducing rates of infant care entry in local areas and delivering cost savings for local areas.”

144. The evaluation also found that, across five sites over a three-year period, the number of infants entering care reduced by 14.4 per local authority area – equating to 215 children in total.

145. Financially, the estimated benefit to cost ratios associated with these effects are £4.50 per £1 spent on Pause over 4 years and £7.61 per £1 spent over 18 years.

146. More locally, the benefits of the Pause Programme were highlighted when 17 women across Stockton, Redcar and Cleveland and Middlesbrough were asked to self-report over a six month period on a range of areas using scaling questions (1 being worst and 10 being best). Using these metrics Pause found the women reported relationships improving with children from just above 4 to almost an 8.

147. The women also reported a significant improvement in their emotional and mental health with just 3% describing their emotional and mental health as being ‘good’ at the start of the programme increasing to 60%.

148. Pause’s work in Middlesbrough is at an early stage, so its impact is still being learned, however, both Pause and Middlesbrough’s Children’s Services work together to refer cases when required.

‘Green Shoots’

149. In December 2020, the Panel heard how ‘green shoots’ had been identified since the Ofsted inspection, due to the work of Futures for Families and Innovate.

Connected Persons Carers

150. 30% of Middlesbrough’s children looked after were placed in a connected carer placement (family members or friends and the child subject of a Care Order). This was the most prevalent placement type.

151. In the 12 months up to December 2020, 167 children ceased to be looked after and almost half of those exited a connected care placement. This meant that Children’s Services is better at moving children into permanence via a Special Guardianship Order or back home than from any other placement type.

152. Between July and October 2020 more connected carer placements had ceased (33) than had started (31). Encouragingly, forecasts show that, based on a three month average, there was a decline in the use of connected carer placements which was partly driven by improved throughput of care case work and a shift in care planning as greater exploration of placements that best suited the child’s needs was being undertaken. Progress was being made but this was still an area that required improvement.

Placement with Parent

153. ‘Placement with Parent’ occurs when a child is subject to a Care Order (looked after by the local authority) but lives with a parent. Such placements should be short term, temporary, arrangements.

154. Traditionally, Middlesbrough has a high number of placements of this nature partly attributed to a legacy of poor social work practice. This has resulted in the Courts lacking confidence in the process resulting in Care Orders being put in place to provide additional oversight.
155. However, audits suggest such Care Orders have not improved social care oversight meaning many families remain on Care Orders for long periods. The result is that either Care Orders should have been discharged much earlier or, in some cases, a child is left in neglectful situations for too long, resulting in them being taken into care. The Panel heard that relationships between Children's Services and the Courts were being strengthened to try and mitigate these occurrences.
156. It was reported that as of the end of October 2020, 87 children were in placements with parents, which had increased by 20% since October 2019. Such placements had increased by 13% in the last six months but reduced by 1% in the last three months. On average, children subject to Care Orders spent 16 months in their placement with parents. 36 of those children were placed with parents for longer than one year; 21 were placed for more than two years; and 10 were placed for more than three years.
157. Data shows that, in the three months up to December 2020, for the first time ever, more children ceased to be looked after in placements with parents (16 children) than those that started being looked after in this placement type (12 children).

External, Residential and Fostering Placements

158. Foster care provides children and young people with stable, loving homes when their own families are unable to do so. In-house fostering refers to foster carers who are approved and registered with Middlesbrough Council and Independent foster carers are those who are approved and registered with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs), external to Middlesbrough Council. Carers can provide a range of placements including respite, short term and long term care. Long term foster care can be a suitable permanency option for many children. Indeed, as at 31 March 2019, 28% of children looked after in England were recorded as being in long term foster homes.
159. Residential care refers to children's homes and can placements can be provided within Middlesbrough Council-run homes (in-house) or by private providers (external residential).
160. As part of a concerted effort to make best use of all available capacity in the system, Middlesbrough had a total of **177** in-house foster care placements (as of December 2020) with the intention of increasing this number to meet national averages. Initiatives to enhance the provision of in-house fostering included a recruitment drive, strengthening of foster care management and the broadening of approval criteria in order to use resources more widely. Also, as of December 2020, there were **154** Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements.
161. Between June and December 2020, there was a reduction of 4% in the use of external residential placements and an increase in the use of in-house foster carers by 14%, allowing Social Workers to maintain children in local foster care placements and to reduce the cost of external placements.

Forecasting and Target Setting

162. On 28 July 2021, Children's Services provided information to the Overview and Scrutiny Board in relation to forecasting and target setting within the Service.
163. Children's Services has developed a set of seven proxy-indicators with indicative targets based on statistical neighbour averages. The indicators aim to support LMT decision-making and scrutiny by providing a clear framework for understanding the progressive impact of Children's Services improvements on combined Council resources.
164. Building on progress over the last 12 months, Children's Services has set an ambition to achieve the statistical neighbour average for the overall rate of children looked after over the next three years. This would bring Middlesbrough's rates of children looked after in line with: Rochdale, Stoke-on-Trent, Tameside, Salford, Knowsley, Blackpool, Hull, Hartlepool, Halton and South Tyneside.
165. The target setting was evidence led and based on moving progressively from Middlesbrough's current children looked after population towards the statistical neighbour average over three years; forecasting future placement distribution based on established trends between 2020-21; and would be modified to take account of in-depth modelling of projected additional reductions in external residential and increases in internal fostering numbers resulting from improvement plan initiatives.
166. Identified risks in progress included unknown and emerging modifying factors (eg Covid, placement sufficiency); slow down rate of improvement and ongoing practice legacy issues; increases in national/regional/statistical neighbour looked after children averages.
167. See the table below for the indicators:-

Indicator	Polarity	June 2020 (baseline Jan 2021)	June 2021	Target 2021/22	Target 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Target Detail
1. Number of substantive posts filled with agency social workers	Lower is better	64	50	48	30	23	Reduce to national average of 23%
2. Number of children in care (No/rate)	Lower is better	670 (202.2)	545 (164.5)	502	459	416 (125.5)	Reduce to SN average
3. Number of children placed in external residential placements	Lower is better	74	58	47	37	35	Reduce to modelled Boro target
4. Number of children placed in in-house residential provision	Higher is better	9	19	21	22	23	Increase to modelled Boro target
5. Number of children placed with in-house foster carers	Higher is better	160	170	169	175	185	Increase to modelled Boro target
6. Number of children placed with IFA carers	Lower is better	168	164	159	143	121	Reduce to modelled Boro target

7. Proportion of placement moves in the reporting period which have incurred less cost (excludes same cost movements)	Higher is better	64.6% (Q1 20-21)	66.7% (Q1 21-22)	68.8%	70.9%	73.0%	Incremental year on year increase
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TERM OF REFERENCE D – PERMANENCY

To challenge people's perceptions of children in care and to create a better understanding of Children Looked After for everyone involved in the process

168. Given the high numbers of children looked after in Middlesbrough, the Panel also wished to explore perceptions of children in care and how negative perceptions and stigma around the care system could be challenged and better understood.
169. Whilst exploring the issue of challenging negative perceptions, the Panel was able to draw on first-hand experience of one of its Members who had experienced the care system as a young person. This provided the Panel with some insight into how a young person might feel and their thoughts prior to, and during, becoming a looked after child and when leaving care.
170. The Member advised that, in his own case, he was placed with several different family members but this was not necessarily the best course of action as this placed tremendous pressure on those family members and ultimately led to additional moves to placements with foster carers. The Panel also heard how, in the Member's experience, there was a perception, because of his age, that he was the problem as he was viewed as being too old to be fostered long term.
171. It is this instability, and constant movement, that can lead to negative perceptions of children in care. The example provided to the Panel demonstrated that having far fewer material possessions prior to being taken into care could impact negatively on appearance in this case a lack of suitable clothing. Importantly, there are also perceptions of young people that can be unrepresentative and unfair. For example, as heard by the Panel, young people being referred to as a 'gang' or 'group of jobs' was particularly misleading. For example, some young people in care gathered together as they were in similar circumstances and did this in order to feel secure and to feel that they belonged to something. Sometimes the groups could appear rowdy but they were not trying to intimidate people or intending to be loud but this was often the only way their voice would be heard.
172. The Panel heard how increased sense of empathy towards children in care and for others to adopt a more child centric approach could make a child's pathway through the care system much easier. Fortunately, in the example provided to the Panel, the Member recalled that due to several Social Workers, Teachers and Foster Carers adopting a more child centred, empathetic and non-judgemental approach, helped both he and his sibling in being successful in their chosen careers.
173. Whilst perceptions of children in care are somewhat entrenched, and not always complementary, there is work being carried out to change those perceptions. Such work is wide ranging through internal and external initiatives.
174. For example, the Panel Member with first-hand experience of the care system welcomed the transition to work placements for young people in care and care leavers – as referred to under 'Community Learning' at Appendix 1 – as this provides additional support to young people in care, or care leavers, to assist them in gaining apprenticeships and employment.
175. Externally, organisations such as 'Become Charity' work with a range of stakeholders to change perceptions of children in care.

Become Charity

176. Become Charity is a national, independent charity for children in care and young care leavers, providing advice and support to care experienced children and young people in several ways including:-
- A dedicated Care Advice Line – Confidential phone line or email service providing advice to any child or young person in care or care leaver.
 - Coaching - For ages 16-27: help to identify and achieve goals and overcome barriers.
 - Weekly Link Up meetings – Virtual hang out for children and young people to chat, take part in activities and quizzes.
 - Propel – website for care leavers providing information on the support available in higher education settings.
 - Care Factsheets – provision of free factsheets on various subjects designed to help children in care and care leavers.
177. Become also provides support and training for professionals working with care experienced children and young people.
178. One of Become’s strategic aims is to change attitudes towards care experienced children and young people in society and the Panel heard about specific work the Charity has undertaken in respect of this.
179. In 2017, Become undertook specific research – ‘Perceptions of Care’ [[Become - Perceptions of Care \(2017\) \(becomecharity.org.uk\)](https://becomecharity.org.uk)] with children in care to explore how they felt they were perceived by others in society, including teachers, social workers and their peers.
180. The work involved dialogue and feedback with focus groups and an online survey. The key statistics that resulted from the study are highlighted as follows:-
- 50% of children in care and 51% of care leavers agreed that “People think it is the children’s fault that they are in care.”
 - 39% of children in care and 43% of care leavers disagreed with the statement “Other children’s parents do not treat children in care differently to other children.”
 - 30% of children in care and 42% of care leavers agreed with the statement that “Where I live, people would not like it if someone opened a children’s home.”
181. Many young people in care feel that there are many assumptions and stereotypes made with regard to children in care and the care system and stigma can be difficult to identify, however, ill-founded perceptions could be attributed to a lack of knowledge and education about the care system.
182. Here are some of the views expressed by the young people who took part in the study:-
- Children who are in care are trouble makers or cause anti-social behaviour.
 - Children are in care because they (the child) have done something wrong.
 - Often young people in care are expected to fail due to low aspirations set by professionals.
 - Young people who had encountered the Police for the first time often felt they were treated like criminals even when they had done nothing wrong and that incorrect assumptions were often made about them being involved in anti-social behaviour or drug taking for example.
 - Young people did not want others to feel sorry for them or treated as if they were more fragile than their peers.

- Young people did not want to be labelled as ‘children in care’, they just wanted to be children. This was a particular concern of children in school – they did not want to be ‘singled out’. They did not want to be treated differently to their peers – whether that be in a negative way or sometimes in an overly-sympathetic way to compensate for them being in care.

"We are expected to fail and it is a stigma. I hated telling people I was in care because it feels like people judge you."

183. During recent discussions with young people in relation to what it meant to be a care leaver, Become found that many young care leavers spoke about being socially intelligent and able to navigate bureaucracy well. Reference was also made to the use of the word resilience when referring to children in care and care leavers and in such contexts it was something that was celebrated, however, many of the young people found this uncomfortable as they considered resilience not to be a choice.
184. Become also found that consistently care leavers appeared to be more aware than those in care of differences in how they are portrayed compared to their peers.
185. A follow up study was undertaken in 2018 – ‘Teachers Who Care’ [[Become - Teachers Who Care \(2018\) \(becomecharity.org.uk\)](#)] – which looked at teacher training and supporting children in care in schools.
186. The study aimed to find out whether teachers had heard similar views expressed as those highlighted by children in care, and included a series of questions in relation to knowledge, attitudes and stigma around children in care and were answered by more than 450 teachers.
187. The study found that **87%** of respondents had heard at least one colleague express a negative generalisation about children in care and **37%** of respondents had heard such views often.
188. The Teachers Who Care 2018 report made nine recommendations (which can be viewed in the link to the document in para194) to schools, training providers, Government and Local Authorities, including a call for the introduction of mandatory training on working with children in care in all schools for all teachers both before and after they qualified.
189. The findings of the report were developed into a resource, “I Wish You Knew” [[Become - I Wish You Knew \(2019\) \(becomecharity.org.uk\)](#)], highlighting the six key things children in care wished their teachers to know about their experience:-
1. What being in care really means.
 2. We all have potential.
 3. I don’t want to be treated differently.
 4. No child in care is the same.
 5. It’s not because we are not trying.
 6. What a big difference you can make.
190. The Panel also considered how the use of language and dialogue in and around the care system could amplify people’s responses. For example, ‘myth-busting’ often had the opposite effect in practice, either reinforcing existing stereotypes or introducing stereotypes to people who were previously unaware.
191. In addition, Become provides secretariat support for the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for children looked after and care leavers. This is a cross-parliamentary group of MPs and Peers that

have an interest in improving the care system and promoting good quality government policy-making. Become launched a spotlight inquiry particularly exploring themes around care and community around the country. This included holding a series of evidence gathering sessions and reaching out to young people to find out how they had been supported to feel part of their local or wider communities and how local communities had been supported to respect and better understand the care experienced members.

CONCLUSIONS

192. Based on the evidence provided throughout the investigation, the Panel's conclusions are as follows:-

- a) The Panel wishes to acknowledge that due to the need for Children's Services to improve with urgency and pace, significant progress has been made since the Panel commenced its review. This is supported by the Department for Education's Children's Commissioner recommending that Children's Services in Middlesbrough no longer required oversight by the Commissioner and was endorsed by the Minister for Children and Families in July 2021.
- b) The Panel also acknowledges that improvements were made despite significant demand on services coupled with the Covid pandemic which called for alternative and inventive ways of working.
- c) The Panel recognises that whilst the number of children looked after in Middlesbrough remains high, it has significantly reduced – with a 19.5% reduction during the period November 2020 to November 2021.
- d) The Panel feels reassured that since the start of its review, significant improvements have been made across Children's Services in Middlesbrough, with the following areas most recently noted as having improved by Ofsted:-
 - Senior managers are realistic and know their service – they are aware of progress and areas that still require improvement.
 - Social Worker caseloads have begun to reduce.
 - There is stronger practice in relation to immediate safeguarding concerns and in support provision for children in need where serious concerns exist and they are on the 'edge of care'.
 - Social Workers are enthusiastic and know their children and families well and are committed to improving their lives.
- e) The Panel also notes positive progress has been made in the following areas:-
 - An increase in the numbers of children being adopted, where it is in their best interests, with more Middlesbrough children being adopted than from any other Tees Valley local authority in the last 12 months up to December 2021. Parallel planning has been improved between Middlesbrough's fostering service and Adoption Tees Valley. In addition, Adoption Tees Valley continues to promote interest in adopting through continuous recruitment events managed by a dedicated Marketing Officer.
 - A significant reduction in the number of children living in connected carer placements and an increase in the number of children whose permanency has been secured via Special Guardianship orders.
 - A 50% reduction in the number of children residing in Placements with Parents during the 12 month period to August 2021.
 - A significant reduction in external residential placements in the six months up to December 2021.
 - An increase in young people being placed in Middlesbrough residential provision.

- An increase in the use of in-house foster care placements as opposed to Independent Foster Agency placements.
- f) The Panel is aware that there are areas of the service that require further development and is keen to ensure it is kept updated on progress.
 - g) The Panel heard that Children's Services has implemented a sophisticated data analysis package to monitor demand, impact and trends and to support improved performance reporting and social work practice. A raft of Performance Management Framework indicators are in place and appropriate scorecards are being developed by the Service Area and Children's Services Improvement Advisor, with input from the relevant Chairs, for use by this Scrutiny Panel, the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel and Corporate Parenting Board for governance and assurance purposes. The Service has also developed a set of seven proxy indicators with indicative targets based on statistical neighbour averages with the ambition of achieving the statistical neighbour average for children looked after over the next three years.
 - h) The Panel recognises that the Futures for Families Service has been successful in providing support for young people on the edge of care and has prevented 37 young people becoming looked after. The service also provides support to fragile placements and placement stability has improved.
 - i) The Panel notes that there have been improvements in practice with consistently high numbers of children looked after being seen by social workers; improved management oversight of cases; consistently high (99%) numbers of children looked after having a recorded Personal Education Plan and more than 90% of children looked after health assessments being carried out. The Panel notes that an area for improvement is dental assessments where 66% of children looked after have had an assessment in the last 12 months, however, this has also been impacted by Covid.
 - j) The Panel is aware of the need to increase the number of Middlesbrough foster carers in order to provide sufficient local placements for Middlesbrough children and acknowledges that in-house capacity has been increased due to continued foster carer recruitment drives and a range of initiatives including managed social work teams (Innovate) specifically working to: bring children from expensive external placements back to Middlesbrough; reduce the number of children placed with parents on care orders (where safe to do so); progressing plans for Special Guardianship where children live with a connected persons carer; and ensuring support is provided for children living with foster carers where the placement is at risk of breaking down. This work has realised significant cost reductions. The Panel acknowledges that there are specific groups of young people for whom more specialised carers/placements are required including older children/teens, parent and baby placements, sibling groups, children with complex needs and/or disabilities, children from minority ethnic groups and that these children can wait longer for permanent homes.
 - k) A Corporate Parenting Strategy has been devised and adopted which includes a Permanency Strategy and Sufficiency Strategic sitting within it. Each strategy was shaped by input from children and young people in Middlesbrough.
 - l) The Panel heard that Children's Services had developed a social work practice model 'Children and Relationships First', developed with the workforce. This was supported by the recently

established Centre for Practice Excellence which, as well as supporting the practice model, provides co-ordination to driving innovation and best practice across the whole system of support for children and young people and offers tools and resources to support the practice model, workforce development, quality assurance arrangements and opportunities to share and develop best practice.

- m) The Panel recognises the excellent work being undertaken by Pause, a national charity working with women who have experienced, or are at risk of, repeat removals of children from their care. Pause offers an intensive support programme with the aim of breaking the cycle of repeat removals by supporting women to tackle destructive patterns of behaviour and to develop new skills and responses to create a positive future. Pause is currently working with 11 women in Middlesbrough.
- n) In terms of improving perceptions of children in care, the Panel is encouraged to learn that increased engagement is taking place with children in care and care leavers through Participation People and is supportive of this being developed going forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS

193. Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation, and the conclusions above, the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel makes the following recommendations for consideration by the Executive:-
- a) The Panel supports the sustained efforts being made to reduce the number of children looked after in Middlesbrough in line with our regional statistical neighbours and that the performance scorecard being reported to LMT on a six-weekly basis in relation to this indicator be shared with the Panel on a quarterly basis.
 - b) The Panel notes the high percentage of children (15.1%) who become looked after at birth and recommends that a specific piece of work be undertaken to establish why this is the case and that this work includes performance information and exploration of whether further interventions can be put in place to reduce this figure. If appropriate, a set of performance indicators should be identified to monitor improvement over the next year in the first instance.
 - c) That analysis be undertaken to identify any potential gaps in child protection provision in the more ethnically diverse wards and further work be undertaken to provide assurance that the statistical under representation/over representation of children of different ethnicities being looked after by the local authority aligns with the level of need amongst these groups.
 - d) That work is undertaken to identify how the provision of Early Help can be increased in North Ormesby, (subject to further analysis and if this remains appropriate), and that the recommendations put forward by this Panel in its Final Report on 'Locality Working from a Children's Services Perspective' regarding further assessment of demand and the number of Early Help workers assigned to the areas, be taken forward.
 - e) That the sustained efforts to increase the number of children being placed in an in-house foster placement be continued and that the targets established remain a key priority indicator for the service and performance be regularly reported to the Panel.
 - f) The Panel appreciates the challenges faced by the service in relation to the recruitment and retention of Foster Carers and the continuous efforts being made to increase in-house Foster Carer provision. It is recommended that additional feedback is sought from Foster Carers leaving Middlesbrough's Fostering Service to ensure that the information gained through the satisfaction surveys is fully utilised to focus on continuing improvement in this area.
 - g) The Panel notes that there is currently very little advertising across the town to indicate that Middlesbrough Council needs and wants more people to become in-house foster carers. The Panel recommends that the work to increase the number of carers continues with pace and focus on additional advertising and marketing which should be analysed to improve awareness of the continuous need for more people to become in-house foster carers.
 - h) The Panel appreciates that an essential strand to improving sufficiency is to continue to improve social work practice. It is acknowledged that numerous initiatives have been put in place to achieve this including the introduction of a Social Work Practice Model, a new Centre for Practice Excellence, the development of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, the work undertaken by the Future for Families Team, the commissioning of Innovate Teams and the effectiveness of the PAUSE project. However, whilst the Panel acknowledges improvements in the reduction of the use of Connected Carer Placements and Placements with Parents, it remains an area for improvement, and it is recommended that performance data is regularly presented to the panel in respect of these elements.

- i) The Panel recognises that particular progress has been made in strengthening the auditing process which provides a wide and in-depth coverage of the quality of services, however, a small proportion of social work practice continues to be identified as 'inadequate' through the audits. Whilst the Panel notes the continuing reduction in 'inadequate' practice, it recommends that increased focus is placed on addressing poor quality practice through increased management oversight, support, guidance and training identified as appropriate for individuals, as set out in the Children's Services improvement plan.
- j) The Panel would also reinforce that the day to day lived experience of the child should be at the heart of all social work practice and that this should be a key feature of learning and development to improve practice and a key part of the auditing process.
- k) That the improvement in the number of children being placed for adoption over the period 2018/19 (17) to 2020/21 (22) be continued alongside the improved focus on permanency planning.
- l) That progress against the set of seven proxy indicators with indicative targets based on statistical neighbour averages be reported to the panel and OSB on a quarterly basis.
- m) That mandatory training to provide a basic awareness of the Children's Social Care system, including information regarding key terms and phrases, be provided to all Council staff and Elected Members through the Middlesbrough Learns platform and that this be completed on an annual basis.
- n) That the local authority considers the use of certain terminology and acronyms that can be perceived as negative in relation to children in care/care leavers and that this be considered in conjunction with the young people themselves via the Children in Care Council, Care Leavers Forum and other participation routes.
- o) That the Participation Officer be asked to undertake a piece of work with children in care and care leavers through the various forums that have been established, to obtain their views around their experiences of the care system, what works well, what does not work well and to present their findings to the Panel and the Corporate Parenting Board.
- p) That opportunities are maximised to continually gather the views of children and young people in care, care leavers and their carers that can be used to shape and drive service improvement within the system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Scrutiny Panel would like to thank the following for their assistance with its work:-

Sue Butcher	Executive Director of Children's Services
Rachel Farnham	Director of Children's Care
Rob Brown	Director of Education & Partnerships
Victoria Banks	Head of the Virtual School
Caroline Cannon	Head of SEN & Vulnerable Learners
Kay Dargue	Head of Partnerships
Trevor Dunn	Head of Access to Education
Gail Earl	Head of Prevention
Claire Kemp	Community Learning & Employability Manager
Amanda Richardson-Roe	Head of Referral & Assessment
Paula Jemson	Head of Corporate Parenting & Performance
Paul Rudd	Residential Care Service Manager
Rob Hamer	Futures for Families Service Manager
Bill Robinson	Children's Services Programme Manager
Jenny Rowan	Team Manager, Children's Care
Sam Turner	Policy & Participation Manager, Become
Vicky Davison-Boyd	Service Manager, Adoption Tees Valley

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following sources were used/referred to in the preparation of this report:-

Reports to, and minutes of, the Children & Young People's Social Care & Services Scrutiny Panel meetings: 14 September, 12 October, 9 November, 7 December 2020, 18 January, 15 February & 22 March 2021.

HM Government - Working Together to Safeguard Children (A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children) July 2018, updated December 2020.

HM Government – Working Together to Safeguard Children (Statutory Framework – legislation relevant to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children) July 2018.

Independent Review of Children's Social Care.

DfE Statistics for Children Looked After in England year end 31 March 2020.

Government Statistics - Fostering in England 2019/20 (main findings).

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations: Vol. 2 – June 2015 – DfE.

Ofsted Inspection on Middlesbrough Children's Social Care Services 25/11/19 – 06/12/19 (published 24/01/20).

Sufficiency – Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children (March 2010).

PAUSE website and correspondence

Become Charity website & reports

COUNCILLOR D DAVISON CHAIR, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE & SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

The Membership of the Panel: Councillors: T Mawston (Vice Chair), A Hellaoui, T Higgins, M Nugent, M Storey, Z Uddin, J Walker and G Wilson.

(During the course of the review, the Panel Membership was as follows: Councillors: L Garvey (Chair), C Dodds (Vice Chair), C Cooke, B Cooper, S Hill, M Saunders, Z Uddin, J Walker, G Wilson & C Wright).

APPENDIX 1

Children's Services – Supporting Children and Families

All of the Services outlined below make up the support mechanisms within Children's Services to support children looked after, those on the edge of care, and their families.

Multi-Agency Children's Hub (MACH)

The Multi-Agency Children's Hub (MACH) is the first point of contact for referrals regarding the welfare or safety of a child/young person. The experienced Social Work Team, headed up by a Team Manager and two Assistant Team Managers, works in conjunction with professionals from Health, Education and Police and other key agencies including CAMHS, Domestic Abuse Services and Missing Co-ordinators.

Each referral into the MACH is screened using the Threshold of Need document in order to determine whether further action is needed and, if so, where the referral should be directed.

Where the referral does not meet the Threshold of Need for statutory intervention, it is directed to the Early Help service. An Early Help Practitioner forms part of the multi-agency team within the MACH and will initially pick up referrals deemed as requiring Early Help. The Practitioner liaises with the relevant Early Help team and the case is allocated to a Practitioner within one of the teams who completes a 'My Family Plan' with the family.

Each member of the household is involved in completing the My Family Plan – including direct work with each child to establish how life is for them on a daily basis - and consideration is then given to decide which services should be engaged to help and support the family.

All professionals involved with the family then meet around every eight weeks to review progress, discuss any concerns and to ensure support is in place for the whole family. If it is felt that Early Help is not working and the family require additional support to that being offered, the family will be stepped up to the Assessment Service.

Assessment Service

Cases allocated to the Assessment Service, or stepped up from Early Help, are prioritised and children within the household are seen within 24 hours where there is thought to be a child protection issue, or within 72 hours where there is thought to be Child in Need issue. A Single Assessment is undertaken, taking between 10 – 45 days depending upon the level of need. The purpose of the Single Assessment is to gather information and consider the needs of the child/young person and/or their family, to decide whether they require any support or whether they have been harmed, or are believed to be at risk of significant harm. The assessment needs to be carried out within 45 days from the point of referral and will generally require a social worker; During the assessment, everyone within the household is spoken to, including direct work undertaken with children.

Social Workers engage with children in an age-appropriate and variety of ways, including drawing, playing games, taking them to the park, to help put them at ease in order to gain an overview of daily life within the household. This is done over the course of several visits in order to build up a relationship with the child.

The Social Worker produces a genogram with the family showing their support network which might include extended family members, friends, etc. and sometimes a Family Group Conference (FGC) is held bringing everyone together to look at ways they might be able to support the family. One of the issues highlighted in the Ofsted inspection findings was that more should be done to include 'absent fathers' in this process.

An individual assessment, including safety plans and Covid planning, is completed for each child and the Assessing Social Worker consults with other colleagues where appropriate, depending on need, to

determine whether the child requires support from a specialist team, such as the Children with Disabilities Team.

Once the single assessment is complete, the Social Worker makes a recommendation as to which service is best placed to support the family. The outcomes from the Single Assessment could be:

- The child is deemed not to be 'In Need', therefore no further action will be taken, other than to provide advice regarding universal services that are available OR, a referral to Early Help
- The child (or children) within the household is deemed to be 'In Need' but is not suffering, or considered likely to suffer, significant harm. In this case, Children's Services will draw up a 'Child In Need' plan with the family, to identify the support they require
- The child (or children) within the household is deemed to be 'In Need' and there are concerns that the child is suffering, or considered likely to suffer, significant harm. In such cases, Children's Services will hold a multi-agency Strategy Discussion to determine whether a child protection investigation (section 47 enquiry) is needed; and consider whether any immediate protection is also required to ensure that the child/young person is safe; for example there are occasions that a child/young person may need to move to live with another family member on a temporary basis or become looked after by the Local Authority.

Where it is decided that a child requires continued involvement with Children's Care, the case is then transferred to one of the Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams (either Child in Need or Child Protection Teams).

Safeguarding and Care Planning

Where a single assessment concludes that further work is required around safeguarding, the case would transition to the Safeguarding and Care Planning Service.

Where child protection concerns are identified, a multi-agency Child Protection Conference is held and the child/children are made subject to a Child Protection Plan. The Plan is in respect of each individual child and focuses on each child's day to day life. Improvement is measured and monitored within set timescales with regular reviews.

In some instances it will be considered necessary to step up cases to a Public Law Outline (PLO) legal framework meeting to consider the local authority's duties when thinking about taking a case to Court to obtain a Care Order in respect of a child. This is used for long term fostering, residential care, etc. The Team works with the family to avoid care proceedings, however, if the children are unable to remain safe in the care of the parents, the authority examines whether they could live safely with another family member or friend, known as a connected persons placement, or with foster carers.

Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting

When a decision is made to remove a child/children from the birth family, the Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting service endeavour to identify forever homes for the child/children that will meet their needs on a long term basis. At this stage in the process, all decision making is required to be extremely thorough, with robust assessments.

Accommodating children in their forever homes can be achieved in a number of ways including:-

- Connected Persons carers (extended family members or close friends);
- Special Guardians;
- Long Term Foster Carers;

- Long Term residential provision. (This is not a preferred option and is only used where a child has very complex needs).
- Adoption.

The Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting Team works closely with the children and birth parents and considers whether it is appropriate for all the children within the household to be placed together or individually. It is always preferable to keep siblings together unless there is a justified reason for separating them and it is deemed not to be in the children's best interests to be placed together. It is essential for the Looked After Children Team to physically see children on a regular basis and to see them alone to undertake direct work with them. This helps build stable relationships with professionals in order for them to protect children and promote their welfare. The child's Social Worker should always promote independent advocacy for the children which is particularly important for older children.

The Team works closely with the Independent Reviewing Officer and CAFCASS (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service) who provide support to the children and birth parents throughout care proceedings. The child's Social Worker will make a recommendation in relation to the plan for the child/children but it is the Court that makes the final decision.

Care planning needs to be timely and robust and the Independent Reviewing Officer has an important role to play.

The Team is responsible for finding permanent ('forever homes') for children and young people. Prospective carers are carefully assessed in a timely way with a suitable match being made as swiftly as possible.

In its 2019 inspection findings, Ofsted identified that children had not been moved to their forever homes quickly enough and that there had been delays particularly in the Safeguarding and Care Planning Service and improvement work is ongoing in this area.

Residential, Fostering and Futures for Families

In some scenarios, a young person may be referred to Middlesbrough's new service, Futures for Families, prior to becoming looked after. Futures for Families was launched in August 2020 and is an edge of care service working with young people to prevent them from being taken into care. The Department for Education (DfE) provided funding for Middlesbrough to develop the service, based on North Yorkshire's 'No Wrong Door' model. It provides a whole system approach with a multi-agency team and a residential component to support young people and their families.

In some instances, a child's needs are best met with residential provision. Middlesbrough has some in-house residential provision, however, this must often be purchased from a private sector provider.

Middlesbrough's in-house residential provision, includes a respite offer at Gleneagles for children with disabilities.

Where it is decided that a child's care plan is for fostering, careful matching with appropriate foster carers takes place.

Middlesbrough foster carers undergo a rigorous assessment process prior to their application being submitted to the Family Placement Panel where a recommendation is subsequently made regarding their suitability. The Panel's recommendation is put forward to the Agency Decision Maker, in this case the Director of Children's Care, for a final decision as to whether the prospective carers have been successful. Carers can be approved to care for varying numbers and age ranges of children depending on the carer's circumstances, for example the provision of short term care, long term care (up to age 18 and beyond),

respite care, specialist provision such as mother and baby placements, or specialising in moving children on to adoptive placements which is a very valuable resource.

Youth Offending Service/Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing, Trafficked (VEMT)

The YOS/VEMT service may become involved with families and/or liaise with the Teams described above, where a child/young person is known to be frequently missing from home or where the child/young person has been arrested.

The South Tees Youth Offending Service is a multi-agency partnership serving both serves both Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland local authority areas. The service is made up of professionals from both Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland's Children's Services, Public Health, Cleveland Police and the National Probation Service.

Where a young person has been arrested, they are brought to the attention of the Youth Offending Service. A separate assessment is undertaken in respect of the young person - the outcome of which will determine the help that is subsequently offered.

The Youth Offending Service works closely with Children's Social Care and follows joint procedures and assessments.

The Service receives daily information from the Police in relation to young people who are missing and each is given a risk management rating of low, medium or high. A 'Missing' Team Manager is located within the MACH and screens cases received into the MACH on a daily basis alongside the Early Help Practitioner.

Every missing young person is offered a Return Home interview which is shared with the child's Social Worker and aims to build up a picture around the young person. Where a young person is repeatedly missing, this is discussed at the VEMT multi-agency Forum, which examines issues around exploitation and shares information with partners. Additional support is provided where appropriate. Children who are missing from education are also discussed at VEMT.

Those young people in VEMT that are deemed to be very high risk, and where professionals feel that concerns need to be escalated to Director level, are assessed and considered by the Risk Management Group. This group is chaired by the Executive Director of Children's Services and considers those young people where very significant concerns exist and those considered to be at high risk of death. The Executive Director takes responsibility for the young people being discussed at this group and they are invited to attend to give their views as to whether they agree that they should be discussed at such a high level and to tell the group about the issues they face.

SEND/Children with Disabilities

The SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Service provides appropriate support to ensure improved outcomes for young people aged 0-25 with special educational needs and those regarded as vulnerable learners, within the statutory framework.

The SEND Assessment Team identifies, assesses and makes provision for children and young people 0-25 with SEND via the Education, Health and Care assessment process as young people progress towards adulthood. The Team also carries out annual reviews of Statements of SEN and EHCPs (Education Health and Care Plan) and provides advice and support to professionals and settings regarding support required for children and young people.

Access to Education

Access to Education encompasses several teams including the Virtual School, School Exclusions and Children Missing from Education.

The Officers within these teams examine issues carefully on a continual basis in conjunction with all schools, including senior leaders, SENCOs, designated teachers and safeguarding leads. Communication between professionals takes place daily in order to pool intelligence on children. Where children are permanently excluded from school the team ensures that legal processes are followed correctly and that schools are compliant.

Where children and/or families went missing, the Team worked with the Police, Home Office and Benefit Agencies to track them down, although it can be difficult to track families who have returned to a foreign country.

Virtual School

The Virtual School is made up of a team of professionals who work closely with carers, parents, schools, social workers and other agencies to help ensure children looked after achieve the best outcomes possible at school.

The team track and monitor attendance, achievement, progress and outcomes, and provide various support and interventions when a child looked after experiences problems at school or falls behind with their learning.

The Virtual School has a team of Personal Education Plan Advisors who work closely with staff in all of the schools which children looked after attend to ensure that they each have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which is of high quality and can be used by all professionals and agencies involved with the child to provide bespoke support. PEPs are reviewed each school term and updated where appropriate.

The team provides advice, guidance and information for all of those involved in the education and progress of children looked after, as well as delivering an extensive programme of training to help upskill stakeholders. Advice and guidance is also provided to parents of previously looked after children.

The Virtual School also plans and helps children looked after to make the transition from nursery to primary school and from primary to secondary education.

Community Learning

Middlesbrough Community Learning provides learning opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. This includes a wide-ranging offer of traineeships and apprenticeships, starting at 16 plus, as well as a programme of adult education through the adult skills budget.

For those who are not in full time employment, education or training, Middlesbrough Community Learning can provide support across a range of options including apprenticeships and training.

Apprenticeships are available from the age of 16 and are delivered in a variety of vocations from Levels 2 to 5, such as business administration, customer service, public service, operational service and supporting teaching and learning in schools.

Additional support is provided with the apprenticeship programme to those young people who are looked after, or care leavers. At the recruitment stage, once an application was received for the chosen apprenticeship, a young person identified as being looked after/care leaver, is be guaranteed an interview providing they met the entry criteria.

Should their application for their chosen apprenticeship programme be unsuccessful, further support is provided via the Youth Employment Team through the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), accessible to young people aged 16-29. An advisor is assigned to the young person providing practical support, such as help with completing applications and building self-confidence for interviews and providing advice to explore other options available. This might include an offer of work experience through the 50 Futures programme if required.

Once the young person commences their apprenticeship, a learning mentor is assigned to them and remains with them throughout their apprenticeship, providing additional support to encourage and build confidence, learn new skills and offer financial advice.

For adults aged 30 and over with multiple barriers into work, support is provided through the Routes to Work Programme.

PAUSE - Report for Scrutiny Panel (Middlesbrough) July 2021

Summary and operational updates

The contract started on 1st April 2020, however Middlesbrough came into the contract a little later.

We have a Data Sharing Agreement in place with Middlesbrough and we take all of the initial referrals from Scoping data gathered by Pause National. **162** women were considered eligible for the Pause service in Middlesbrough.

Middlesbrough sent the details of **18** women they considered most at risk of repeat pregnancies that would likely lead to children being removed from their care on 18th August 2020. We are commissioned to work with **10** women in Middlesbrough.

Out of those **18** women; **9 women are open** on the program and **1 is engaging**. She regularly meets with the practitioner and is being given the full offer, we hope she will be open in the next couple of weeks. We have also received a number of referrals directly from children's social Worker's following final hearings.

Closed without being open;

5 women declined the service or there was not enough information to track the women down and offer the service, **6** of the women were not eligible to work with Pause due to no risk of pregnancy (sterilisation 1), **2** had children in their care, **1** still in court proceedings, **1** moved out of area. **1** of the women had too complex mental health difficulties to be able to consent to the Pause program.

5 women that declined the Pause service were engaging for some time and were offered supports and referrals into other services for a period of 3 months.

Engaging but never opened

1 woman was in an abusive relationship, the practitioner continued to attend her property and felt although the woman declined the service, she continued answering the door, accepted care packages. The woman was then supported to flee an abusive relationship and moved to a women's refuge in York. As such she is out of area, but built a trusting relationship with the practitioner and managed to get to safety. She reported that she looked forward to their short door step interactions and gave the woman hope that things could be different, but she could never talk openly as her abusive partner was in the home.

Once women are open on the program we have had **0% drop out rate**.

Women have consistently chosen to focus on **(1) Relationship with my children, (2) housing** and **(3) physical and mental health** as their top priorities.

The **10** women on the programme have had a total of **28** children removed from their care (an average of 3 children per woman). The women range in **age from 23 to 41 years old**, with an average age of **28 years**. **22%** of the women have **care experience**.

Partnerships

We continue to build partnerships with **Virgin Care Sexual Health Services**. There has been a slow start with women waiting 3 or 4 weeks for telephone triage appointments and a further 3-4 weeks to be able to gain contraception. We now have a pathway for women to be seen the next day. We are hoping to hold a group for Pause women with a sexual health nurse discussion around STD/STI's general sexual health and how to safely use home testing kits.

We have made positive links with **IMPACT on Teeside** and are looking at starting a bespoke **grief and loss group** for women that are on the Pause Program and this starts in August 2021.

Next month we are presenting to **Adoption Tees Valley** and Middlesbrough **Adult Safeguarding** following some frontline partnership working.

We have also made links with **My Sisters Place**.

Group work and creativity

We have been on day trips since the easing of lock down to **Redcar beach and Beamish**, with women from all over the North East.

We run a virtual drop in session where we have ran **healthy cooking sessions on a budget**, crafts groups with a link made with MIMA.

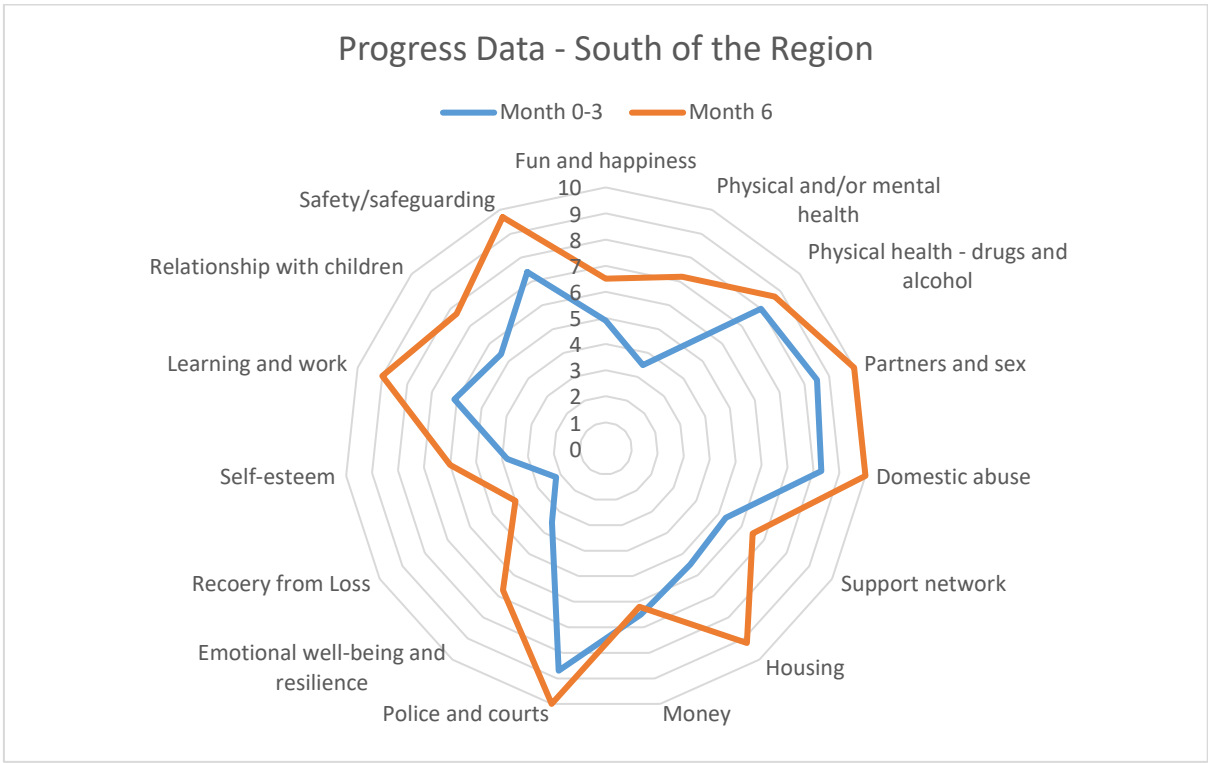
Groups really help with **self-esteem building, reduced social isolation, managing loss** through reducing the stigma of child removal through peer support and shared experience, role modelling positive behaviours and trying new things.

We have worked in collaboration with Digital Me for the women to create **a film** displaying a song that was written by Pause women during a **Music Therapy one to one and group** facilitated through Pause. This also includes women's art work, poetry and interviews about their experiences of services and working with Pause, explain the way in which they would like to be supported by services to recover from past and present traumas. They have created a podcast through music therapy about the woman's journey and writing songs about working with Pause, domestic abuse and the loss of her children,

We have also been working with **Open Clasp Theatre company** and the women have co-written a play to explore the complexities, challenges and successes in relationship between women that have had their children removed from their care and social workers. They are holding auditions for this in July 2021.

Outcomes;

The radar chart shows how **17 women** working with Pause North East (Stockton, Redcar and Cleveland and Middlesbrough) have self-reported on a range of areas such as through scaling questions (where 1 is the lowest score possible and 10 is the highest). We use the women's self-report on relationship with children as a proxy measure for how our work affects children.



Outcomes for women and children: Mental health

Women’s mental health outcomes looks at CORE 10 scores and answers to the assessment question; ‘*How would you describe your mental and emotional health?*’

Mental and Emotional Health



1.

Row Labels	Baseline	Mid point	Final
Good	3%	30%	60%
Neither good nor bad	30%	40%	20%
Bad	43%	20%	20%
Very bad	23%	10%	0%

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MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

ADDENDUM

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD 11 MAY 2022 FINAL REPORT CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE & SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL SUFFICIENCY & PERMANENCY (PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN IN CARE)

1. The Scrutiny Panel's review was carried out over the course of the full Municipal Year 2020-21 and was lengthy to compile given the volume of evidence provided, the very broad subject matter and various changes in political structures.
2. Given that the Children's Services improvement journey was required to move at pace, and that the service has inevitably been subject to continuous monitoring and inspection by Ofsted, many of the issues of concern to the Panel at the time of the review had already begun to be addressed and progress is being made.
3. The progress made to date by Children's Services is supported by the decision made by the Minister for Children and Families to endorse the recommendations made in July 2021 by Peter Dwyer, Department for Education's Children's Commissioner, that the Service no longer required oversight by the Commissioner.
4. Mr Dwyer worked closely with the Council from January 2020 and his final report in July 2021 noted "considerable progress has been made and there is evidence of real impact." "Most impressively in the face of significant demand and need, the Council has tackled legacy issues which had inflated the volume of cases in higher tiers of provision."
5. The Commissioner's report noted specific improvements including a reduction in the numbers of children on Child Protection Plans and a speeding up of assessment timeframes. The number of Children Looked After reduced from a peak of **702** in August 2020 to **539** in July 2021.
6. With this in mind, it is worth highlighting that the data provided to the Panel was correct at the time it was provided and that by the nature of the subject matter, data is constantly changing and evolving.
7. On 14 and 15 December 2021 a second Ofsted Monitoring Visit took place, specifically focusing on: Children in Need; Children in Need of Protection and Public Law Outline.
8. The findings of the inspection include:-
 - Senior managers have a realistic view on progress made since the last inspection.
 - Social worker caseloads have reduced.
 - The ongoing improvement work has resulted in stronger practice when there are immediate safeguarding issues, and in the support for children in need where there are serious concerns and they are on the edge of coming into care.
 - All of the social workers that met inspectors on this visit knew their children and families well, and have an enthusiasm and passion for working with them and improving their lives.
 - The Council is ensuring that children are allocated to social workers who have the required time to work with them.

- More focus is needed on the lived experience of individual children, but notes that plans are in place to address this and other issues

National Picture – Latest Headline Information – 2020-21¹

9. The latest figures available from the DfE for Children Looked After in England as of year end 31 March 2021.
10. As at 31 March 2021, the number of Children Looked After in England was **80,850** – this figure has increased by **1%** from the previous year and is now at an all-time high.
11. **28,440** children started being looked after during the year ending 31 March 2021 – down **8%** on the previous year.
12. **28,010** children ceased to be looked after during the year ending 31 March 2021 – down **6%** on the previous year.
13. The number of children who ceased to be looked after because they were adopted was **2,870** – down **18%** on the previous year.
14. The rate per 10,000 children, aged 18 and under, who were looked after as at 31 March 2021 was **67** and this was the same as in 2020.
15. The data shows that in 2021, the number of children looked after by local authorities in England rose to its highest level at **80,850**, up by **1%** on the previous year.
16. The increase was driven by there being slightly more children started to be looked after during the year than those ceasing to be looked after, however, both starting and ceasing were down with monthly figures showing:-
 - The numbers of children starting to be looked after were consistently lower than usually expected throughout the year but were particularly low during periods of national lockdowns or when restrictions were in place.
 - The numbers of children ceasing to be looked after were similarly affected by the first national lockdown but returned to the levels typically expected from September 2020 onwards. This fall is likely to have driven an increase in the average duration of care for those ceasing to be looked after, which increased by a further 79 days (more than two and a half months) compared to the previous year.
17. Other interesting headlines suggest an impact of the pandemic are:-
 - The number of CLA who were adopted has fallen 18%, continuing a fall from a peak in 2015. The large decrease this year is likely driven by the impact on court proceedings during the pandemic where cases progressed more slowly or were paused.

¹ DfE Statistics for Children Looked After in England year end 31 March 2021.

In Middlesbrough

18. In providing this update, the following update information was provided to the Corporate Parenting Board meeting on 18 January 2022:-

Permanency

19. From the height of **702** children looked after in September 2020, the figure has reduced to **510**. During the 12 month period November 2020 to November 2021, numbers had reduced from 654 to 526. This was a **19.5%** reduction.
20. This equates to **197.4** per 10,000 per population in November 2020 reducing to **158.8** in November 2021. This is the lowest rate in 12 months and was continuing to reduce month on month. By January 2022, this rate reduced further to **149** per 10,000 – narrowing the gap for demand between Middlesbrough and its regional statistical neighbours (whose rate was **134** per 10,000).
21. In terms of adoption, since 1 April 2021, **19** adoption orders have been granted, including four to children from BAME backgrounds; four to sibling groups of more than two and four to children over the age of four.
22. More Middlesbrough children have been adopted than from any other Tees Valley Local authority.
23. There has been a significant reduction in the number of days between a Placement Order being granted and a child being adopted has reduced from **558** in 2019/20 to **382** in 2020/21.
24. There are currently **38** Middlesbrough children progressing to adoption, with all but two children already linked to potential adopters.
25. Within the last 12 months **76** children secured permanency via Special Guardianship Orders.
26. As at January 2022, there were **114** children residing in connected carer (kinship care) placements. This has reduced from a peak of **212** in 2020.
27. **47** children currently resided in Placements with Parents (PWP) and this has reduced from **52** in October 2021, and from a peak of **99** in September 2020, then **50** in August 2021. This equates to an overall reduction of 52%.
28. There has been a reduction in external residential placements from **74** in June 2021 to **47** in December 2021. This is a positive step as children cared for in Middlesbrough and in Middlesbrough placements achieve better outcomes.
29. School attendance for looked after children stood at **91%** in November 2021 and there had been no permanent exclusions in the last five years.
30. **3.1%** of looked after children are receiving less than 25 hours of education per week (11 children). Action Plans and oversight from the Virtual School were in place for each child.
31. Children's Services has identified that risks to making continuing progress include: an increase in demand across the Tees Valley, and the region as a whole; recruitment of staff within the children looked after and care leaving services.

Sufficiency

32. In terms of increasing placements for Middlesbrough children that are closer to home, internal occupancy increased to **23** young people being placed across Middlesbrough's residential provision. Work is continuing on a regional framework (12 north east local authorities) or sub regional framework to develop this.
33. The intensive work undertaken with PAUSE has proved positive and the contract has been extended for a further six months. PAUSE is currently working with **11** women who have had multiple children removed from their care or are at risk of further removals.
34. Of the **326** foster placements, the number of in-house foster care placements (with Middlesbrough foster carers) has increased to **169 (52%)** and has now overtaken the number of placements with Independent foster carers (IFAs), **157 (48%)**. Middlesbrough continues to run a significant recruitment campaign to attract in house foster carers. In addition, a business case for a new in-house fostering service delivery model continues to be developed.
35. Weekly monitoring takes place in respect of residential placements in Middlesbrough and there has been a shift away from reliance on external market provision towards in-house residential provision, largely due to the opening of Rosecroft and Daniel Court.
36. At the start of January 2022 there were **68** young people placed in residential provision – **23 (34%)** in internal provision and **45 (66%)** in external provision but this was reducing.

Demographics

37. In terms of the children looked after population in Middlesbrough, **54%** are male; **45%** are female and **1%** are unaccompanied asylum seeker children.
38. In terms of ethnicity of the current children looked after population in Middlesbrough, the highest percentage are White/British – **81%**, with **8%** mixed race; **7%** Black or Black/British; **2%** Asian or Asian/British and **2%** from various other nationalities.
39. Within the six months up to January 2022, **97** children became looked after due to abuse or neglect (this is a slight increase on the year 2020/21) and remains significantly higher than statistical neighbours and the England average.
40. In terms of **demand**, in January 2021 there were **617** children looked after in Middlesbrough. This figure has reduced by **17%** during the last 12 months (to January 2022), and there has been an overall reduction of **27%** since the height of demand in September 2020 (**702** children looked after).
41. For every 0.6 children entering care, one child exits and this ratio has been maintained for the six-month period to January 2022.

Futures for Families

42. Since going live in September 2020, Futures for Families had supported **50** young people on the edge of entering care. Of those 50, **37** had not become looked after (74%).
43. Of the 37 young people that did not become looked after:-
- 21 were supported at Child in Need level (57%).
 - 11 remained supported at Child in Need level.
 - 10 children (47%) no longer required a Child in Need Plan and were no longer in need of support by the local authority.
 - 16 young people (43%) were subject to Child Protection procedures.
 - 10 remained supported at Child Protection level.
 - 4 (25%) were 'stepped down' to receive Child in Need support.
 - 2 (13%) no longer required any service from Children's Social Care.

Caseloads

44. Since December 2020, and throughout the improvement journey, caseloads have consistently reduced. Whilst caseloads vary between services, the average caseload across Children's Social Care (per full time equivalent employee) stands at **16.7** in December 2021. This has reduced from **22.3** in December 2020.

Placement Stability

45. In the last 12 months, less than **5%** of the children looked after population have experienced placement breakdowns.
46. In January 2021, **123** (20%) looked after children had experienced three or more placements over the last 12 month period.
47. This has reduced to **36** in December 2021. This equates to 7% of the current looked after population. This figure is currently below all external benchmarks and below Middlesbrough's outturn for 2020/21.
48. This has been achieved through improvement in practice, ensuring care plans are reviewed more regularly and more effective in supporting placement stability; stronger partnership working and stronger management oversight.
49. It is worth pointing out that not all placement moves are disruptive. For example, a child may move from a foster placement back to parents or to a planned adoptive placement.

Quality and Impact

50. In terms of outcomes and quality of practice, key performance outcomes from the December 2021 performance report are highlighted below:-
- **94%** of children looked after had been seen within the last six weeks. This is a 5% decrease from November 2021, however, this has been consistently high with more than 90% of children looked after being seen since May 2021.
 - Management oversight of cases has improved, with **94%** of children looked after receiving management oversight in the form of supervision within the month of December 2021. Again, this is a 5% decrease from November 2021, however, this

has been consistently high with more than 90% of CLA receiving management oversight since May 2021.

- **99%** of children looked after had a recorded Personal Education Plan (PEP) within the previous six months. This performance has remained consistently high and has not dropped below 93% for the last 12 months.
- **90.8%** of CLA health assessments have been conducted and recorded within the last 12 months. (This does not include a small cohort of older young people who did not wish to undertake a health assessment). Again, performance has been consistently high at more than 90% for the last 12 months.
- **66.1%** of children had undergone dental assessments in the last 12 months and appears to be one of the areas most impacted by Covid and requires ongoing improvement.

Changing Perceptions of Children in Care

51. Key to improving perceptions around children in care is ensuring the voice of those with care experience is heard and listened to.
52. Since the review was undertaken, a significant amount of work has been ongoing to increase participation with children in care and care leavers. This includes the commissioning of 'Participation People' – an organisation that delivers award-winning youth voice, engagement and participation programmes across the UK and is working with Middlesbrough Council to:-
 - Inspire Change – Changing the approach to working with young people by transforming organisational culture.
 - Gain Data – Helping to understand the lived experience of young people by using youth-led programmes.
 - Take Action – Keeping young people engaged and working with them to find out what they think needs to change.
53. As a result of collaborative working, the following groups have recently been re-launched for care experienced young people to come together and have a voice in influencing key decision makers when developing services for children and young people:-
 - Middlesbrough Mini Children in Care Council – for care experienced young people aged 7 – 12 years
 - Middlesbrough Children in Care Council – for care experienced young people aged 13 – 17 years
 - Middlesbrough Care Leavers Forum – for care experienced young adults aged 18 – 25 years.
54. In addition, through engagement with Participation People, Middlesbrough's Corporate Parenting Board has been kept updated and involved in youth engagement work and recently hosted a workshop with care experienced young people and care leavers to speak to them about their experiences of being looked after, their hopes and aspirations for the future and how they see services for young people being shaped.

CONCLUSIONS

31. Based on the evidence provided throughout the investigation, the Panel's conclusions are as follows:-
- a) The Panel wishes to acknowledge that due to the need for Children's Services to improve with urgency and pace, significant progress has been made since the Panel commenced its review. This is supported by the Department for Education's Children's Commissioner recommending that Children's Services in Middlesbrough no longer required oversight by the Commissioner and was endorsed by the Minister for Children and Families in July 2021.
 - b) The Panel also acknowledges that improvements were made despite significant demand on services coupled with the Covid pandemic which called for alternative and inventive ways of working.
 - c) The Panel recognises that whilst the number of children looked after in Middlesbrough remains high, it has significantly reduced – with a 19.5% reduction during the period November 2020 to November 2021.
 - d) The Panel feels reassured that since the start of its review, significant improvements have been made across Children's Services in Middlesbrough, with the following areas most recently noted as having improved by Ofsted:-
 - Senior managers are realistic and know their service – they are aware of progress and areas that still require improvement.
 - Social Worker caseloads have begun to reduce.
 - There is stronger practice in relation to immediate safeguarding concerns and in support provision for children in need where serious concerns exist and they are on the 'edge of care'.
 - Social Workers are enthusiastic and know their children and families well and are committed to improving their lives.
 - e) The Panel also notes positive progress has been made in the following areas:-
 - An increase in the numbers of children being adopted, where it is in their best interests, with more Middlesbrough children being adopted than from any other Tees Valley local authority in the last 12 months up to December 2021. Parallel planning has been improved between Middlesbrough's fostering service and Adoption Tees Valley. In addition, Adoption Tees Valley continues to promote interest in adopting through continuous recruitment events managed by a dedicated Marketing Officer.
 - A significant reduction in the number of children living in connected carer placements and an increase in the number of children whose permanency has been secured via Special Guardianship orders.
 - A 50% reduction in the number of children residing in Placements with Parents during the 12 month period to August 2021.
 - A significant reduction in external residential placements in the six months up to December 2021.
 - An increase in young people being placed in Middlesbrough residential provision.
 - An increase in the use of in-house foster care placements as opposed to Independent Foster Agency placements.

- f) The Panel is aware that there are areas of the service that require further development and is keen to ensure it is kept updated on progress.
- g) The Panel heard that Children's Services has implemented a sophisticated data analysis package to monitor demand, impact and trends and to support improved performance reporting and social work practice. A raft of Performance Management Framework indicators are in place and appropriate scorecards are being developed by the Service Area and Children's Services Improvement Advisor, with input from the relevant Chairs, for use by this Scrutiny Panel, the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel and Corporate Parenting Board for governance and assurance purposes. The Service has also developed a set of seven proxy indicators with indicative targets based on statistical neighbour averages with the ambition of achieving the statistical neighbour average for children looked after over the next three years.
- h) The Panel recognises that the Futures for Families Service has been successful in providing support for young people on the edge of care and has prevented 37 young people becoming looked after. The service also provides support to fragile placements and placement stability has improved.
- i) The Panel notes that there have been improvements in practice with consistently high numbers of children looked after being seen by social workers; improved management oversight of cases; consistently high (99%) numbers of children looked after having a recorded Personal Education Plan and more than 90% of children looked after health assessments being carried out. The Panel notes that an area for improvement is dental assessments where 66% of children looked after have had an assessment in the last 12 months, however, this has also been impacted by Covid.
- j) The Panel is aware of the need to increase the number of Middlesbrough foster carers in order to provide sufficient local placements for Middlesbrough children and acknowledges that in-house capacity has been increased due to continued foster carer recruitment drives and a range of initiatives including managed social work teams (Innovate) specifically working to: bring children from expensive external placements back to Middlesbrough; reduce the number of children placed with parents on care orders (where safe to do so); progressing plans for Special Guardianship where children live with a connected persons carer; and ensuring support is provided for children living with foster carers where the placement is at risk of breaking down. This work has realised significant cost reductions. The Panel acknowledges that there are specific groups of young people for whom more specialised carers/placements are required including older children/teens, parent and baby placements, sibling groups, children with complex needs and/or disabilities, children from minority ethnic groups and that these children can wait longer for permanent homes.
- k) A Corporate Parenting Strategy has been devised and adopted which includes a Permanency Strategy and Sufficiency Strategic sitting within it. Each strategy was shaped by input from children and young people in Middlesbrough.
- l) The Panel heard that Children's Services had developed a social work practice model 'Children and Relationships First', developed with the workforce. This was supported by the recently established Centre for Practice Excellence which, as well as supporting the practice model, provides co-ordination to driving innovation and best practice across the whole system of support for children and young people

and offers tools and resources to support the practice model, workforce development, quality assurance arrangements and opportunities to share and develop best practice.

- m) The Panel recognises the excellent work being undertaken by Pause, a national charity working with women who have experienced, or are at risk of, repeat removals of children from their care. Pause offers an intensive support programme with the aim of breaking the cycle of repeat removals by supporting women to tackle destructive patterns of behaviour and to develop new skills and responses to create a positive future. Pause is currently working with 11 women in Middlesbrough.

- n) In terms of improving perceptions of children in care, the Panel is encouraged to learn that increased engagement is taking place with children in care and care leavers through Participation People and is supportive of this being developed going forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS

32. Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation, and the conclusions above, the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel makes the following recommendations for consideration by the Executive:-
- a) The Panel supports the sustained efforts being made to reduce the number of children looked after in Middlesbrough in line with our regional statistical neighbours and that the performance scorecard being reported to LMT on a six-weekly basis in relation to this indicator be shared with the Panel on a quarterly basis.
 - b) The Panel notes the high percentage of children (15.1%) who become looked after at birth and recommends that a specific piece of work be undertaken to establish why this is the case and that this work includes performance information and exploration of whether further interventions can be put in place to reduce this figure. If appropriate, a set of performance indicators should be identified to monitor improvement over the next year in the first instance.
 - c) That analysis be undertaken to identify any potential gaps in child protection provision in the more ethnically diverse wards and further work be undertaken to provide assurance that the statistical under representation/over representation of children of different ethnicities being looked after by the local authority aligns with the level of need amongst these groups.
 - d) That work is undertaken to identify how the provision of Early Help can be increased in North Ormesby, (subject to further analysis and if this remains appropriate), and that the recommendations put forward by this Panel in its Final Report on 'Locality Working from a Children's Services Perspective' regarding further assessment of demand and the number of Early Help workers assigned to the areas, be taken forward.
 - e) That the sustained efforts to increase the number of children being placed in an in-house foster placement be continued and that the targets established remain a key priority indicator for the service and performance be regularly reported to the Panel.
 - f) The Panel appreciates the challenges faced by the service in relation to the recruitment and retention of Foster Carers and the continuous efforts being made to increase in-house Foster Carer provision. It is recommended that additional feedback is sought from Foster Carers leaving Middlesbrough's Fostering Service to ensure that the information gained through the satisfaction surveys is fully utilised to focus on continuing improvement in this area.
 - g) The Panel notes that there is currently very little advertising across the town to indicate that Middlesbrough Council needs and wants more people to become in-house foster carers. The Panel recommends that the work to increase the number of carers continues with pace and focus on additional advertising and marketing which should be analysed to improve awareness of the continuous need for more people to become in-house foster carers.
 - h) The Panel appreciates that an essential strand to improving sufficiency is to continue to improve social work practice. It is acknowledged that numerous initiatives have been put in place to achieve this including the introduction of a Social Work Practice Model, a new Centre for Practice Excellence, the development of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, the work undertaken by the Future for Families Team, the commissioning of Innovate Teams and the effectiveness of the PAUSE project. However, whilst the Panel acknowledges improvements in the reduction of the use of Connected Carer Placements and Placements with Parents, it remains an area for improvement, and it is

recommended that performance data is regularly presented to the panel in respect of these elements.

- i) The Panel recognises that particular progress has been made in strengthening the auditing process which provides a wide and in-depth coverage of the quality of services, however, a small proportion of social work practice continues to be identified as 'inadequate' through the audits. Whilst the Panel notes the continuing reduction in 'inadequate' practice, it recommends that increased focus is placed on addressing poor quality practice through increased management oversight, support, guidance and training identified as appropriate for individuals, as set out in the Children's Services improvement plan.
- j) The Panel would also reinforce that the day to day lived experience of the child should be at the heart of all social work practice and that this should be a key feature of learning and development to improve practice and a key part of the auditing process.
- k) That the improvement in the number of children being placed for adoption over the period 2018/19 (17) to 2020/21 (22) be continued alongside the improved focus on permanency planning.
- l) That progress against the set of seven proxy indicators with indicative targets based on statistical neighbour averages be reported to the panel and OSB on a quarterly basis.
- m) That mandatory training to provide a basic awareness of the Children's Social Care system, including information regarding key terms and phrases, be provided to all Council staff and Elected Members through the Middlesbrough Learns platform and that this be completed on an annual basis.
- n) That the local authority considers the use of certain terminology and acronyms that can be perceived as negative in relation to children in care/care leavers and that this be considered in conjunction with the young people themselves via the Children in Care Council, Care Leavers Forum and other participation routes.
- o) That the Participation Officer be asked to undertake a piece of work with children in care and care leavers through the various forums that have been established, to obtain their views around their experiences of the care system, what works well, what does not work well and to present their findings to the Panel and the Corporate Parenting Board.
- p) That opportunities are maximised to continually gather the views of children and young people in care, care leavers and their carers that can be used to shape and drive service improvement within the system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Scrutiny Panel would like to thank the following for their assistance with its work:-

Sue Butcher	Executive Director of Children's Services
Rachel Farnham	Director of Children's Care
Rob Brown	Director of Education & Partnerships
Victoria Banks	Head of the Virtual School
Caroline Cannon	Head of SEN & Vulnerable Learners
Kay Dargue	Head of Partnerships
Trevor Dunn	Head of Access to Education
Gail Earl	Head of Prevention
Claire Kemp	Community Learning & Employability Manager
Amanda Richardson-Roe	Head of Referral & Assessment
Paula Jemson	Head of Corporate Parenting & Performance
Paul Rudd	Residential Care Service Manager
Rob Hamer	Futures for Families Service Manager
Bill Robinson	Children's Services Programme Manager
Jenny Rowan	Team Manager, Children's Care
Sam Turner	Policy & Participation Manager, Become
Vicky Davison-Boyd	Service Manager, Adoption Tees Valley

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following sources were used/referred to in the preparation of this report:-

Reports to, and minutes of, the Children & Young People's Social Care & Services Scrutiny Panel meetings: 14 September, 12 October, 9 November, 7 December 2020, 18 January, 15 February & 22 March 2021.

HM Government - Working Together to Safeguard Children (A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children) July 2018, updated December 2020.

HM Government – Working Together to Safeguard Children (Statutory Framework – legislation relevant to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children) July 2018.

Independent Review of Children's Social Care.

DfE Statistics for Children Looked After in England year end 31 March 2020.

Government Statistics - Fostering in England 2019/20 (main findings).

The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations: Vol. 2 – June 2015 – DfE.

Ofsted Inspection on Middlesbrough Children's Social Care Services 25/11/19 – 06/12/19 (published 24/01/20).

Sufficiency – Statutory Guidance on Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked After Children (March 2010).

PAUSE website and correspondence; Become Charity website & reports

**COUNCILLOR D DAVISON
CHAIR, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE & SERVICES SCRUTINY
PANEL**

**The Current Membership of the Panel: Councillors: T Mawston (Vice Chair),
A Hellaoui, T Higgins, M Nugent, M Storey, Z Uddin, J Walker and G Wilson.**

(During the course of the review, the Panel Membership was as follows: Councillors: L Garvey (Chair), C Dodds (Vice Chair), C Cooke, B Cooper (from S Hill, M Saunders, Z Uddin, J Walker, G Wilson & C Wright).

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**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE & SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL
SUFFICIENCY & PERMANENCY (PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN IN CARE) - ACTION PLAN**

6th September 2022

SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	PROPOSED ACTION	POST TITLE	BUDGET COST	TIMESCALE
a) The Panel supports the sustained efforts being made to reduce the number of children looked after in Middlesbrough in line with our regional statistical neighbours and that the performance scorecard being reported to LMT on a six-weekly basis in relation to this indicator be shared with the Panel on a quarterly basis.	<p>The Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) Scorecard is presented to CPB on a monthly basis. On a quarterly basis, these scorecards can be shared with Scrutiny Panel.</p> <p>The CPB scorecard contains all relevant data regarding CLA population in Middlesbrough.</p>	Head of Corporate Parenting and Looked After Children Head of Service	Within current resources	Quarterly
b) The Panel notes the high percentage of children (15.1%) who become looked after at birth and recommends that a specific piece of work be undertaken to establish why this is the case and that this work includes performance information and exploration of whether further interventions can be put in place to reduce this figure. If appropriate, a set of performance indicators should be identified to monitor improvement over the next year in the first instance.	<p>A collaborative piece of work was completed following the Born into Care Review earlier in 2022. This piece of work found that for all of these babies who came into care, this was the right decision for them.</p> <p>Subsequently a multi-agency Pre-Birth Forum meets every fortnight and reviews all unborn babies referred and open to social care to track their plans for permanency. This includes significant support from the partnership to support for these children to remain in the care of their parents.</p> <p>A set of performance indicators will be</p>	Head of Safeguarding and Care Planning	Within current resources	<p>Completed</p> <p>Fortnightly</p> <p>Oct 2022</p>

	<p>identified to monitor improvement over the next year.</p> <p>The indicators will be introduced into the monthly Director of Social Care's Performance Clinic for analysis and monitoring</p>			September 2022
c) That analysis be undertaken to identify any potential gaps in child protection provision in the more ethnically diverse wards and further work be undertaken to provide assurance that the statistical under representation/over representation of children of different ethnicities being looked after by the local authority aligns with the level of need amongst these groups.	<p>A thematic audit will be undertaken focusing on children who came into care from ethnic minority groups, within the last six months to identify any specific services which may support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our understanding of diverse communities and their needs, • What might support children to remain at home safely. 	<p>Head of Safeguarding and Care Planning</p> <p>Head of Strategic Services</p>	Within current resources	Report completed by end of January 2023 and submitted to Scrutiny Panel in February 2023.
d) That work is undertaken to identify how the provision of Early Help can be increased in North Ormesby, (subject to further analysis and if this remains appropriate), and that the recommendations put forward by this Panel in its Final Report on 'Locality Working from a Children's Services Perspective' regarding further assessment of demand and the number of Early Help workers assigned to the areas, be taken forward.	This action will be progressed through the Locality Working Action Plan.	Head of Service Early Help and Prevention	Within current resources.	No action with regards to this plan.
e) That the sustained efforts to increase the number of children being placed in an in-	Increasing the proportion of in house fostering placements to remain a key	Head of Service Futures for	Within current	Quarterly

<p>house foster placement be continued and that the targets established remain a key priority indicator for the service and performance be regularly reported to the Panel.</p> <p>e.g. In May 2022 there was a targeted recruitment campaign held with Fostering Fortnight. This included radio broadcasts and a social media campaign.</p>	<p>priority for the service.</p> <p>The Fostering Service will work closely with the Marketing Team to adjust and amend the marketing strategy to ensure the local authority are maximising exposure to potential new carers.</p>	<p>Families</p> <p>Marketing Team</p>	<p>resources</p>	<p>Already Ongoing</p>
<p>f) The Panel appreciates the challenges faced by the service in relation to the recruitment and retention of Foster Carers and the continuous efforts being made to increase in-house Foster Carer provision. It is recommended that additional feedback is sought from Foster Carers leaving Middlesbrough's Fostering Service to ensure that the information gained through the satisfaction surveys is fully utilised to focus on continuing improvement in this area.</p>	<p>All foster carer resignations are already subject to review from the Family Placement Panel.</p> <p>Themes from resignations and from termination of foster carers approval status will be collated and reviewed to inform future recruitment and retention of foster carers.</p> <p>Feedback will be sought from Foster Carers leaving Middlesbrough's Fostering Service. The satisfaction surveys will to be utilised to focus on continuing improvement in this area and this will also feed into ongoing recruitment strategies.</p> <p>The Fostering Service will implement satisfaction surveys as part of the annual reviewing process with each foster carer to ensure that satisfaction is maintained and retention is</p>	<p>Head of Service Futures For Families</p>	<p>Within current resources</p>	<p>Already ongoing</p> <p>December 2022</p> <p>Feedback to be sought with immediate effect</p> <p>Jan 2023</p>

	supported. This will go live within four months			
g) The Panel notes that there is currently very little advertising across the town to indicate that Middlesbrough Council needs and wants more people to become in-house foster carers. The Panel recommends that the work to increase the number of carers continues with pace and focus on additional advertising and marketing which should be analysed to improve awareness of the continuous need for more people to become in-house foster carers.	<p>Since May 2022 there has been a focussed recruitment and retention campaign.</p> <p>There is a specific advertising campaign that includes city billboards within the town, billboard posters within the local bus stops, there has been a recent leaflet drop to local residents, a social media campaign that links articles in Facebook to the Love Middlesbrough magazine and Primary Times magazines.</p> <p>Advertising will take place on the LED screen at 6 future home matches at Middlesbrough Football Club. Staff from the Fostering team will be handing leaflets to crowds attending the stadium.</p> <p>The Recruitment Team Manager and Marketing team will review the impact of the ongoing recruitment campaign and ensure appropriate changes are made.</p> <p>Fortnightly analysis of the data regarding the internet traffic (google analytics) will take place to measure progress with the marketing campaign.</p>	<p>Head of Service Futures For Families</p> <p>Marketing Team</p>	<p>Within current resources</p>	<p>Timescale TBA</p> <p>Fortnightly from October 2022</p> <p>Fortnightly from October 2022</p>

<p>h) The Panel appreciates that an essential strand to improving sufficiency is to continue to improve social work practice. It is acknowledged that numerous initiatives have been put in place to achieve this including the introduction of a Social Work Practice Model, a new Centre for Practice Excellence, the development of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, the work undertaken by the Future for Families Team, the commissioning of Innovate Teams and the effectiveness of the PAUSE project. However, whilst the Panel acknowledges improvements in the reduction of the use of Connected Carer Placements and Placements with Parents, it remains an area for improvement, and it is recommended that performance data is regularly presented to the panel in respect of these elements.</p>	<p>The Permanency Scorecard will continue to be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board on a bi monthly basis.</p> <p>The Permanency Scorecard will be shared with the Children and Young Peoples Services Scrutiny Panel on a quarterly basis.</p>	<p>Head of Corporate Parenting and Looked After Children Head of Service</p>	<p>Within current resources</p>	<p>Bi Monthly</p> <p>Quarterly from Jan 2023</p>
<p>i) The Panel recognises that particular progress has been made in strengthening the auditing process which provides a wide and in-depth coverage of the quality of services, however, a small proportion of social work practice continues to be identified as 'inadequate' through the audits. Whilst the Panel notes the continuing reduction in 'inadequate' practice, it recommends that increased focus is placed on addressing poor quality practice through increased management oversight, support, guidance and training</p>	<p>The Children's Services Centre for Practice Excellence will focus on quality of practice through Practice Leads, implementation of the Quality Assurance Framework and audit findings and the Workforce Development Strategy.</p> <p>The implementation of the existing Children's Services Improvement Plan is monitored by the Multi Agency Strategic Improvement Board which meets on a 6 weekly basis</p>	<p>Director of Children's Social Care</p> <p>Executive Director of Children's Services</p>	<p>Within current resources</p>	<p>6 weekly</p> <p>6 weekly</p>

identified as appropriate for individuals, as set out in the Children's Services improvement plan.				
j) The Panel would also reinforce that the day to day lived experience of the child should be at the heart of all social work practice and that this should be a key feature of learning and development to improve practice and a key part of the auditing process.	<p>Practice Standards have been devised and will continue to be embedded within the service and to all new staff which reinforces that the day to day experience of the child should be at the heart of all social work practice.</p> <p>The audit tool has been reviewed to ensure that there is a specific focus on the voice of the child. This includes consideration of whether or not those working and supporting the child know the child and understand their lived experience and how this has been used to inform decision making and planning. This will continue to be used within the monthly deep dive audit programme.</p> <p>Service user feedback will continue to be a key part of monthly audits.</p> <p>The current monthly learning reviews which takes place between the audit team and the Principal Social Worker will continue. All themes from audit will continue to be considered to inform the training and development offer</p>	<p>Principal Social Worker</p> <p>Head of Strategic Services</p>	<p>Within current resources</p>	<p>Already ongoing</p> <p>Monthly</p> <p>Already ongoing on a monthly basis</p> <p>Already ongoing on a monthly basis</p>
k) That the improvement in the number of	An Early Permanence and Pre-birth	Head of	Within	Already

<p>children being placed for adoption over the period 2018/19 (17) to 2020/21 (22) be continued alongside the improved focus on permanency planning.</p>	<p>Forum is in place and will continue, alongside a dedicated pre-birth team of social workers. This specific focus and role will help to drive forward early planning, permanence and decisions for those children where adoption is the plan.</p>	<p>Safeguarding Head of Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting</p>	<p>existing resources</p>	<p>ongoing</p>
<p>l) That progress against the set of seven proxy indicators with indicative targets based on statistical neighbour averages be reported to the panel and OSB on a quarterly basis.</p>	<p>The Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) Scorecard is presented to CPB on a monthly basis. On a quarterly basis, these scorecards can be shared with Scrutiny Panel.</p> <p>The CPB scorecard contains all relevant data regarding CLA population in Middlesbrough.</p>	<p>Head of Corporate Parenting and Looked After Children</p> <p>Head of Strategic Service</p>	<p>Within current resources</p>	<p>Already ongoing on a quarterly basis</p>
<p>m) That mandatory training to provide a basic awareness of the Children's Social Care system, including information regarding key terms and phrases, be provided to all Council staff and Elected Members through the Middlesbrough Learns platform and that this be completed on an annual basis.</p>	<p>Mandatory training will be provided to relevant Council staff and Elected Members through the Middlesbrough Learns platform. This will provide a basic awareness of the Children's Social Care system, including information regarding key terms and phrases. This will be provided and completed on an annual basis.</p>	<p>Principal Social Worker</p>	<p>Within current resources</p>	<p>Annually</p>
<p>n) That the local authority considers the use of certain terminology and acronyms that can be perceived as negative in relation to children in care/care leavers and that this be considered in conjunction with the</p>	<p>The Participation Officer will work with young people to develop a dictionary of terms used with the aim of changing the language used to describe the care system.</p>	<p>Head of Strategic Services</p>	<p>Within current resources</p>	<p>Jan 2022</p>

<p>young people themselves via the Children in Care Council, Care Leavers Forum and other participation routes.</p>	<p>The children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum have recently helped to design the Communication and Language training and will continue to support this.</p>	<p>Head of Strategic Services</p>		<p>Already completed</p>
<p>o) That the Participation Officer be asked to undertake a piece of work with children in care and care leavers through the various forums that have been established, to obtain their views around their experiences of the care system, what works well, what does not work well and to present their findings to the Panel and the Corporate Parenting Board.</p>	<p>The Participation Officer will consult with children and young people and request that they consider taking part in a piece of work.</p> <p>If accepted, the Participation Officer will work with children in care and care leavers through the various forums that have been established, to obtain their views around their experiences of the care system, what works well, what does not work well and will present their findings to the Panel and the Corporate Parenting Board.</p>	<p>Head of Strategic Services</p>	<p>Within current resources</p>	<p>Dec 2022</p> <p>Feb 2022</p>
<p>p) That opportunities are maximised to continually gather the views of children and young people in care, care leavers and their carers that can be used to shape and drive service improvement within the system.</p>	<p>Children and family consultation will continue to be part of the audit process and used to inform learning and shape and drive service improvements within the system.</p> <p>All complaints and compliments, including those from children and young people will be reviewed, trends identified, reported to the CPB and this Scrutiny Panel and used to inform training</p>	<p>Head of Strategic Services</p> <p>Service Manager IRO Service</p>	<p>Within current resources</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Timescale to be informed by democratic services</p>

	<p>The Children in Care Council, Mini Children in Care Council and Care Leavers forum will continue to be invited (representatives) to attend monthly learning reviews to share their views, wishes and experiences to shape practice via the training and development offer.</p>			<p>Already ongoing</p>
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