

Ofsted Monitoring Visit March 22

CYP Social Care & Services Scrutiny Panel

June 2022

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Thank you to everyone for your support and for your contributions towards making this visit a success.



MIDDLESBROUGH
CHILDREN
M A T T E R



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

Context

- Third Monitoring Visit since the last full inspection (plus a focused visit)
- Two Inspectors, two weeks preparation, two days on site 29th/30th March
- First one that has been ‘face to face’
- Monitoring Visit feedback letter published 6th May 2022
- Areas covered
 - Matching, placement and decision-making for Children in Care
 - Planning and achieving permanence for children.

Perception

- We know ourselves. This is evidenced by our
 - Detailed improvement plan
 - Accurate Self Assessment (SEF). It's 'Spot On'.
- We know this through
 - Our Quality Assurance processes – It is not just about compliance!
 - Robust reviewing processes and panels
 - Audits – the learning loop is crucial
- The Centre for Practice Excellence. It is our central focus for collating learning and improvement.

Permanence ‘Forever Homes for Children’



- There is a systemic framework for permanency planning – it’s less reactive and more forward looking.
- Stronger practice with children who have come into care more recently and more thought about early permanence planning
- Permanency plans now include parallel planning to avoid drift and delay for children.
- Social workers know children need permanence and know what they need to do to achieve it.
- Regular and high quality supervision actively contribute to early permanence planning
- Monthly Permanence Monitoring Group (PMG) meetings track and quality assure both plans and progression towards permanence

Positives (1)

- Children in Care are visited regularly
- Most SWs know their children well and have built trusting relationships with them.
- Good direct work – calibrated to a child’s age and understanding
- Children’s voices are informing their planning.
- Family Time
 - Children benefit from safely assessed family time
 - Family time with wider family members is well considered
 - Brother and sister ‘Together or Apart’ assessments are completed quickly and relationships are maintained if they can’t live together.

Positives (2)

- Children are brought into care in a more timely way through better court applications
- Good feedback from the local judiciary and CAFCASS
- Child Permanence Reports are sensitively written
- SWs understand the need for children to have life story work so they will understand their parentage and identity as they grow up
- Children's records are written directly to the child by social workers who know them
- Children will be able to see the thought that went into the planning for their forever homes.

Positives (3)

- Planning
 - Care planning meetings, supervision sessions, reviews and legal gateway are well recorded forums for reflective and creative thinking. They provide clear oversight of the plans and actions for the best interests of children. Therefore children experience less delay.
 - Independent Reviewing Officers have improved oversight of children's plans. There is evidence of them carrying out mid-point reviews to consider if these plans are progressing.

Points to Consider

- There is still some impact on children from a legacy of absent or poor planning.
- Some children have experienced earlier unplanned placement moves and consequent disruption and instability
- There are a number of children placed with family members who have not been assessed and approved as connected foster carers.
- There is a minority of children with complex needs in unregistered children's homes awaiting a suitably matched regulated placement. The carer's ability to meet their needs is undetermined and unregulated.
- However, leaders are aware of these children and all have individual assessments and cumulative oversight to mitigate against risk.

People

- Senior leaders know their services well
- Social workers spoke positively about the determined efforts to make improvements and create the conditions for good social work practice through clear expectations and standards.
- They value the
 - Support from their team members
 - Training and development programme
 - Growing supportive working culture.

What's next?

- **DfE Review.** Representatives met with front line staff on 17th May and will meet with partners and corporate leaders this month
- **Ofsted Monitoring Visit** mid-July. Focusing on Early Help, MACH and the Assessment Service.