

**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
<p>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>	<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 Head of Service</p>	<p>Within current resources</p>	<p>Quarterly</p>
<p>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>	<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>	<p>Head of Safeguarding and Care Planning</p>	<p>Within current resources</p>	<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>

<p>identified as appropriate for individuals, as set out in the Children's Services improvement plan.</p>				
<p>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>	<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>
<p>k) That the improvement in the number of</p>	<p>An Early Permanence and Pre-birth</p>	<p>Head of</p>	<p>Within</p>	<p>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.	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.	Safeguarding Head of Looked After Children and Corporate Parenting	existing resources	ongoing
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>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>	Within current resources	Already ongoing 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.	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.	Principal Social Worker	Within current resources	Annually
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	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.	Head of Strategic Services	Within current resources	Jan 2022

<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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