

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD - 28 MARCH 2023

**FINAL REPORT - CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S
SOCIAL CARE & SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL:
SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE TO PREPARE FOR
ADULTHOOD & INDEPENDENCE**

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AIM OF THE INVESTIGATION

1. The aim of the investigation was to examine the support provided to Middlesbrough's vulnerable young people in preparing for adulthood and independence, with a particular focus on care leavers, and to identify any gaps in provision and improvements that could be made.

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:-

To examine the support available to Middlesbrough's vulnerable young people, with a particular focus on care leavers, in relation to preparing for independence and adulthood, including:-

- A) To consider how the Council seeks to secure employment or training for young people with care experience and/or additional needs.
- B) To look at ways in which young people with care experience are supported and encouraged to actively participate – with service development and part within their community

¹ Middlesbrough Council's Strategic Plan 2021-24

- C) To consider, where it is appropriate for a young person to move to supported accommodation or independent living, the options available and the support provided to young people and their families/carers (where appropriate) to prepare and plan for independent living.
- D) To examine how care experienced young people are supported with budgeting their finances and how they are supported to ensure their physical and emotional health needs are met.
- E) To look at how young people with care experience and/or additional needs are supported to become more independent in travelling to school/college/other education settings/places of employment, or to help them become more independent with travelling socially.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION/EVIDENCE GATHERED

Preparing for Adulthood and Independence in Middlesbrough

5. In line with the Terms of Reference, the Scrutiny Panel gathered evidence in relation to a range of support provided by the Council and its partners to help vulnerable young people to prepare for adulthood and independence.
6. In broad terms, there are several key areas within Children's Services where support is offered to young people in preparation for adulthood and independence, including: Children with disabilities; Care Leavers and young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET); young people with Special Educational Needs (SEND).
7. It is worth noting that many of the services within the Children's Services directorate, particularly those mentioned below, work together and in collaboration with other directorates across the Council as well as external partners to provide holistic support for young people in Middlesbrough.
8. The Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy refers to the responsibility of corporate parents to ensure, as far as possible, secure, nurturing and positive experiences for children in care, and care leavers, as defined in law for the first time in the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
9. Under the Children Act 2004, local authorities have a duty to promote co-operation between 'relevant partners', including the Police, NHS and education providers, whilst in turn those partners have a duty to co-operate with the local authority. Guidance on the Act highlights that corporate parenting is "... a task that must be shared by the whole local authority and partner agencies".
10. In a similar vein to ensuring that children and young people are safeguarded, ensuring that young people are adequately prepared for adulthood and independence is everyone's business. A range of Council services and partner organisations are key to ensuring young people are fully supported to become independent adults, including:-
 - Stronger Families Service
 - SEND and Inclusion Service
 - Children with Disabilities Service
 - Children Looked After and Pathways (Leaving Care) Service
 - Virtual School; Education and Schools
 - Youth Offending Service
 - NHS North of England Commissioning Support Unit
 - Housing providers
 - Adult Social Care

- Integrated Support Solutions (for example substance misuse)

Stronger Families

11. Stronger Families, or Early Help, provides targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family, focussing on activities to improve outcomes for the child. An assessment of need is undertaken for children and young people and their families where it has been identified that they would benefit from early help interventions.
12. Stronger families refer young people into Adult Social Care Services prior to becoming 18 for preparation for adulthood and Youth Provision work with young people with SEND up to the age of 25.
13. Within Stronger Families, the Education, Employment and Training service (Work Readiness) supports young people aged 16-18 into suitable education, training and employment opportunities.
14. After the age of 18, young people are allocated a Support Worker and young people with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and care leavers are supported by a worker until the age of 25.

SEND and Inclusion

15. In supporting young people to prepare for adulthood, the SEND and Inclusion Service must have a clear delivery plan to ensure that the vision and outcomes as identified within the SEND Code of Practice are achieved.
16. A Strategic 'Preparation for Adulthood' Group was established to understand the direction of travel and to identify and fill any gaps in provision. The group meets every six weeks and reports to the SEND and Inclusion Group, chaired by the DCS, to ensure there is a clear line of sight by senior managers.
17. The voice of the child is key throughout supporting all young people. When young people with special educational needs were asked about their aspirations for the future, the majority stated that they wanted the same things as anyone else – to have a job, their own home, perhaps get married and have children of their own.
18. The key areas of focus in preparation for adulthood within the SEND and Inclusion Service are as follows:-
 - Increasing the range of pathways and post-16 opportunities including supported internships and enterprise.
 - Improving and increasing the number of employment and independence opportunities.
 - Improving provision planning and transition to adulthood.
 - Ensure the voice of the child/young person is central to everything, with co-production at the heart.

- Embedding preparation for adulthood fully across the whole 0-25 education, health and care system.
- Ensuring robust policies and procedures are in place to facilitate a smooth transition to adulthood for all young people.

Children with Disabilities

19. Within the Children with Disabilities (CwD) service there are two Social Work Teams and one Short Breaks Team.
20. There are approximately 100-120 children currently open to the Social Work Teams. This means they meet the criteria through having a profound disability or life-threatening condition.
21. The frequency of contact between the Social Worker and young person depended on the individual. Of the 120 young people known to CwD, each had an allocated social worker and 20 are visited every 12 weeks. Visiting more frequently than every 12 weeks was not always necessary due to amazing parents and established support packages, and the fact that the majority of families wanted to live with as little social work intervention as possible. However, Social Workers are always on hand if and when needed.
22. Approximately 200 children in Middlesbrough that receive a short break. Short breaks provision, for the majority of young people, consisted of a few hours a week at a specialist youth provision, such as the MFC Foundation offering sporting activities.
23. The next category of provision was Personal Advisors who visit the young person in their home and take them out to cafés, shopping, or other leisure activities and sometimes at weekends.
24. High level support packages to prevent young people from entering residential care could include the short breaks unit at Gleneagles Resource Centre. 37 children currently have an overnight stay here usually on a monthly basis, and 10 children use it one night per week as this was deemed necessary. Some short breaks are funded by Health such as overnight stays at Zoe's Place who welcome young people with complex needs.
25. The aim of all the short breaks offered is to support the young person to develop and encourage any interests they may have and to give them a sense of greater independence.
26. The Social Workers within the CwD Teams work with young people from 14-15 years old and carry out a Capacity Assessment. The assessment looks at whether the young person has capacity to make their own decisions as adults and Social Workers complete the assessment in conjunction with parents, the young person and courts to ensure their needs and rights are met.
27. There are currently around 30 young people in Middlesbrough who do not have the capacity to decide for themselves. The remaining young people have capacity to make their views known and their views are gathered in relation to their future aspirations.

28. CwD works closely with colleagues in Adult Social Care and young people are presented to their 'Transitions Panel' at the earliest opportunity. Adult Social Workers are usually allocated at least six months prior to the young person's 18th birthday so that their transfer to adult care is as seamless as possible.
29. For young people with a disability, an assessment is undertaken to establish whether their needs rely on Health or Social Care. Where the outcome is Health, a Lead Professional from health is appointed to work with the CwD Social Worker. At 18 years old, the young person would then close to the Children's Social Worker and would not be open to an Adult Social Worker (unless this was the outcome determined by the assessment).
30. Young people with disabilities have the same needs as any other young person – to be safe, secure, happy, to have a good home, employment, education or training and to have a good support network of people who cared about them around them.
31. For children and young people with sensory loss, within CwD, there is a programme of developing practice leads to provide specific support to young people with hearing, sight and speech loss/impairment. In addition the Sensory Teaching Advisory and Resource Services (STARS) operates across the Tees Valley for those with hearing and sight impairment. The Council employs a member of staff who supports those young people, from 14 years onwards, to become more independent, for example how to make a drink, travelling on public transport, etc. STARS work closely with colleges to provide equipment to make young people's lives easier – such as braille machines, etc. This is a highly specialised area, however, there is currently a good offer in Middlesbrough.

Children with Disabilities - Preparation for Adulthood – Tees-wide

32. There are a range of Tees-wide policies and procedures in place in relation to preparing for adulthood, including:-
 - Tees-wide Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) implementation group in place and liaison with the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Manager (Adult Social Care) and Legal Services.
 - Tees Transitions document which follows national guidance.
 - A Forum to support young people aged 17.5 years and over, who had been exploited.
 - A system is in place for Police to inform the Local Authority of people who go missing (of all ages) and an internal system to refer those over the age of 18 to Adult Social Care.
33. New legislation around liberty safeguards is anticipated to be implemented in Spring 2023 and this will result in an increase in the number of capacity assessments required to be undertaken within the CwD service. The new legislation will affect anyone working with children and young people and staff are currently being trained in preparation for this.
34. The current Tees-wide priorities are identified as follows:-
 - Workers to understand the Human Rights Act

- Mental Capacity Act Training (currently being delivered and due to finish in January 2023).
- Workers to be able to recognise a deprivation.
- Best Interest Assessors to feel comfortable completing assessments – Adult Social Care are willing to offer opportunities for workers to complete assessments and support through this process.

Team Around the Young Person

35. It is important to ensure that co-ordinated planning takes place when putting a team around the young person to best support them. Once the young person's capacity to make decisions has been determined, the team of support around them is built. This crucially includes professionals from social care, education and health, together with the young person's family and community networks who are fully involved as part of the decision-making process.
36. Various planning meetings – such as Child in Need; Child Protection and Children Looked After Plans and Care Management meetings – are used to identify the young person's aspirations, needs and wishes. If the young person is a Looked After Child they will also have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) that is reviewed each school term.
37. Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) are also used to identify the young person's aspirations and needs and are used to drive forward the Council's decision-making and commissioning decisions in respect of the young person.

Pathways (Leaving Care) Service

38. The Pathways (Leaving Care) Service supports care leavers, including young people with disabilities, to live successful, independent lives. A care leaver is defined as a young person who has been in the care of the local authority for a period of 13 weeks or more, spanning their sixteenth birthday.
39. The Service provides a wide range of support and signposting across all of the terms of reference identified by the Scrutiny Panel. For the purpose of this report, the Panel sets out here the essence of how the Pathways Service supports care leavers to achieve independence.
40. In Middlesbrough, the Pathways Service consists of two teams – each with a Team Manager and Assistant Team Manager – six Social Workers assigned to young people aged 15 years and three months, and nine Personal Advisors working with young people aged 16-25. The Team also includes a dedicated CAMHS Worker who can offer additional support around emotional wellbeing.
41. In accordance with Section 3 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, local authorities are required to provide Personal Advisors to care leavers up to the age of 25. Their role is to help young people to positively transition to adulthood by:-
- Providing advice (including practical advice) and support to the young person.
 - Participating in reviews of the young person's case.
 - Liaising with the responsible authority in the implementation of the pathway plan.

- Co-ordinating the provision of services.
 - Keeping informed about the young person's progress and well-being.
 - Maintaining full, accurate, up to date records of contacts with the young person and services provided.
 - Providing information about financial capability and how to manage daily finances.
 - Providing housing options available to the care leaver.
 - Supporting the young person to find further education, employment or training.
 - Keeping in touch with the young person.
42. In accordance with the national minimum standard, Personal Advisors keep in touch with the young person (from age 18 onwards) every eight weeks. If a young person has more complex needs or requires additional support, contact is more frequent - daily in some cases.
43. Personal Advisors, on average, (as at November 2022), between 18 and 23 young people assigned to them. Their caseloads are monitored by the Improvement Board and the target is to not exceed 23, therefore, this target is currently being met.
44. The average number of cases held by the Social Workers within the Pathways Team is approximately 22-23 per worker. Social Worker caseloads vary between service areas with higher caseload levels in the assessment and safeguarding teams due to greater demand.
45. Every eligible care leaver has the right to a Needs Assessment. This assessment is completed by a Social Worker when the young person reaches 16 years old and includes consideration of their independent living skills and ability to manage their own finances. The aim of the assessment is to ensure the young person leaves care at a time that is right for them.
46. Pathways Plans are developed for each care leaver – setting out their needs, views, goals and what support they will receive once they have left care. The Plan must be based on the completed Needs Assessment and is reviewed every six months.
47. Pathway Plans include the following information:-
- The nature and level of contact and personal support to be provided.
 - Access to financial support, depending upon need - An assessment of the young person's financial needs and capacity and any financial assistance to be provided. (A financial assessment is undertaken and guidance to ensure the young person is aware of their entitlements).
 - The young person's health needs and how they should be met.
 - Arrangements to support the young person in further education or employment. (Support to engage and/or maintain engagement).
 - Arrangements to support the young person in sustaining and developing family relationships. (Helping young people to maintain focus on keeping in touch with people who are important to them, such as parents, siblings, friends, etc).
 - Arrangements to ensure the young person is properly equipped for taking greater responsibility towards independence.
 - Arrangements to ensure the young person is living in suitable accommodation.

- Any 'Staying Put' arrangements. (Once young people in foster care reached the age of 18, discussions take place with their carers regarding 'staying put'. There are currently 25 young people living in 'staying put' arrangements).
48. In October 2020, following consultation with young people, the 'Local Offer for Care Leavers in Middlesbrough' was created. The Local Offer provides information for Middlesbrough's care experienced young people in relation to entitlements and support available to them to help in all aspects of their adult lives. The document is currently being reviewed and updated to ensure it remains relevant to the needs of Middlesbrough's young people.
49. The areas of support within the Local Offer include:-
- Relationships
 - Education and Training
 - Employment
 - Emotional Wellbeing
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Accommodation
 - Finances
 - Participation
50. Pathway planning, together with the Local Offer, is key to identifying the individual's needs and the Pathways Service supports young people to become independent, particularly in the following areas:-
- Becoming Independent
 - Employment, education and training
 - Health
 - Housing
 - Finances

Becoming Independent

51. The Pathways Service supports care leavers to become independent in the following ways:-
- Access to financial support, depending on need.
 - Computer and internet access.
 - Support to open a bank account.
 - Support to be provided with a form of ID, such as passport, birth certificate or driving licence.
 - Access to money management support in order to develop budgeting skills.
 - Personal allowance. (Young people aged over 16 living in supported accommodation are not entitled to benefits so are provided with a personal allowance).
 - Financial assistance for university students.
 - Invitations to social groups. (A weekly social group meets at the Pathways Service building offering support and a range of activities such as movie nights and cooking classes).

- Care Leavers Forum to provide an arena for young people's views to be heard, supporting service development.
52. The Pathways (Leaving Care) Service is located within a dedicated building in Park Road North and welcomes care leavers at any time. The building has a fully equipped kitchen and shower room and staff are always on hand to spend time with young people and to help them.
53. Young people with significant issues would have an Adult Care Social Worker allocated to them once they reached 18 and this transition from Children's Social Care to Adult Social Care was overseen by the 'Transitions Panel', and continued to be a care leaver.

"Ready or Not: Care Leavers' Views on Preparing to Leave Care" – Gov.UK

54. In January 2022, the Government published a report "Ready or Not: Care Leavers' Views on Preparing to Leave Care". The full report sets out what care leavers said was important about preparing to leave care; being involved in decision making about planning for their future; being supported through the process; leaving care during the pandemic and makes recommendations for Ofsted and Corporate Parents. Here is a link to the full report:-

[‘Ready or not’: care leavers’ views of preparing to leave care - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/105221/ready-or-not-care-leavers-views-on-preparing-to-leave-care.pdf)

55. The report recognises that approaching adulthood and leaving the care system is a time of extra challenges, anxiety and fear for many young people. The research looks at the planning and preparation that happens before a young person leaves care.
56. An online survey of children in care (aged 16 to 17) and care leavers (no age limit) was undertaken to explore whether the help they received when preparing to leave care was what they needed, and how involved they were in the decisions made about their future. Interviews were also held with a small number of people who left care a longer time ago, to get a view of what the impact of preparation (or lack of) has had on their lives after leaving care.
57. The findings reflect the views provided by the care leavers that took part, through the survey and interviews, regarding their experiences. Findings are not necessarily representative of all care leavers' experiences and it is worth noting that the research is based on care leavers' perceptions of the preparation they received.
58. The key findings from the research included:-
- More than a third of care leavers felt they left care too early. This was often because the move out of care happened abruptly and they were not ready for all the sudden changes. Of those who did feel they left care at the right time, not all felt they had the required skills to live more independently. Many care leavers stated that they were not taught essential skills, such as how to shop, cook or manage money.
 - Many care leavers felt 'alone' or 'isolated' when they left care and did not know where to get help with their mental health or emotional well-being. Many had no-one to talk to about how they were feeling or to look out for them. A third of care stated they did not know where to get help and support. For many, no plans had been made to support their mental health or emotional well-being when they left care.

- Although statutory guidance requires young people to be introduced to their personal advisor (PA) from age 16, over a quarter of care leavers did not meet their PA until they were 18 or older. Care leavers saw PAs as helpful in preparing to leave care, but a fifth felt they had met them too late. Two fifths of the children still in care stated they did not yet have a PA, meaning that some about to leave care still did not know who would be helping them.
 - Some care leavers could not trust or rely on the professionals helping them to prepare for leaving care. Care leavers needed someone they could rely on for help when they felt scared or worried, but sometimes they felt that professionals were 'rude' or 'uninterested', or showed a lack of respect, for example by cancelling meetings, turning up late or ignoring their feelings.
 - Care leavers were not involved enough in plans about their future. Around a quarter of care leavers reported they were not at all involved in developing these plans. Some felt that, even when they expressed their wishes, they were not listened to, or that they did not fully understand the options. Some felt that plans did not match their aspirations. For many, this had a long-term impact on their education or career path, as well as their emotional well-being.
 - Many care leavers had no control over where they lived when they left care, and many felt unsafe. Only around a third of care leavers had a say in the location they would like to live in and even fewer (a fifth) in the type of accommodation. One in 10 care leavers never felt safe when they first left care. Many care leavers were worried about the area or people where they lived. Sometimes the area was completely unfamiliar to them or was seen as a crime and exploitation hot spot. Many care leavers also felt unsafe living on their own.
 - Many care leavers felt unprepared to manage money. Some were not aware of what bills they needed to pay, or how to budget. In some cases, this led to them getting into debt, losing tenancies, or not being able to afford food or travel. Some care leavers were still in debt years later. When they were asked what made them feel unsafe when they first left care, being worried about money was the most common reason reported. A few care leavers reported getting into crime when they left care in order to get money, or because they were not able to manage their finances.
 - Some care leavers said they did not find out about their rights until they were already in serious difficulties. In some cases, care leavers were already in debt or homeless before they were told about the help they could access. Only around half remembered being told about the support and services available in the local care leaver offer. A similar proportion reported being told how to complain and even fewer were told how to get advocacy support. Care leavers (or their carers) who had engaged advocacy services had found this help to be vital.
59. Over time, there has been greater recognition of the importance of preparing care leavers to leave care. For example, the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 introduced further duties and additional functions for local authorities on top of the Children Act 1989.
60. Some simple things that can make a huge difference to care leavers' experiences should always put in place. These include:-
- Informing care leavers about the available support.

- Helping them to stay in touch with people important to them.
- Working with them to ensure that they have the skills they need before moving on.

Ofsted Monitoring Visit to Middlesbrough – November 2022 – Care Leavers

61. On 1 and 2 November 2022, Ofsted carried out a monitoring visit to Middlesbrough's Children's Services, focusing on older children leaving care and care leavers.
62. The findings from the monitoring visit provided clarity in relation to those areas where progress had been made since the initial full inspection and areas requiring improvement. Some of the identified areas for improvement were acted upon immediately and further actions were added to the Improvement Plan.

Positives

63. The findings stated that since the initial full inspection (December 2019):-
- Services for older children in care and care leavers have started to improve.
 - Most older children who were approaching leaving care are supported to develop the necessary independence skills needed to live alone.
 - Most care leavers told inspectors that they had experienced a positive transition from care, including that they had been well supported by their social workers and their personal advisors.
 - Regular contact is maintained with most children and care leavers, with care leavers making use of the dedicated social media messenger page to stay in touch.
 - Independent advocates are offered to children and care leavers, and they have been actively involved in supporting them with their issues and concerns.
 - Those children and care leavers who benefitted from the supported living accommodation and the bespoke children's home are well supported to prepare for independent living. Staff provide them with opportunities to develop life skills and promote resilience in preparation for living alone. It is clear that they have established trusting relationships with support staff who are attuned to their needs. It is a real positive that those children and care leavers who talked to inspectors, and who lived in those homes, were all either in education or work.
 - Return home interviews after children have been missing are undertaken in a timely way and information from the child or care staff provides a helpful insight to understand risk. Children have appropriate safety plans and oversight from the vulnerable exploited missing and trafficked (VEMT) Panel. Consequently, children have reduced their missing episodes as well as their risks in the community.

Areas for Improvement

64. Some of the areas for improvement were identified as follows:-
- Transition planning for some children has not been as effective as it should have been. As a result, a small number of care leavers described feeling rushed when moving out of care and this had resulted in a small number remaining as children in care post-18 due to a lack of planning with continued support in accommodation.
 - Some young people stated they needed more financial support to enable them to buy food and

pay their energy bills. Plans are in place to ensure the right level of support are implemented.

- There is a variation in quality of Needs Assessments and the resulting Pathway plans. Most plans require tighter target setting/smarter focus, however, the better plans and assessments include the clear voice of the child and care leaver and are written to them. This means that children and care leavers are very clear about their rights and entitlements.
- Contingency planning is mostly absent or entirely focused on the breakdown of living arrangements rather than a holistic view of the child and care leavers and their circumstances.
- The Pathways Team did not always demonstrate sufficient curiosity and challenge about the care leaver's holistic needs. Managers have acknowledged this is an area for development. In addition, some newer members of the team did not receive the frequency of supervision and type of support that they would benefit from to develop themselves and progress their understanding of the work.
- Whilst most personal advisors talked enthusiastically about their care leavers, and described 'stickability' with them, this did not always translate into direct action which is promoting young people's safeguarding and well-being. Risk for some care leavers is not always recognised in a timely way.

Next Steps

65. Based on Ofsted's findings, an Action Plan has been developed by Children's Services, including modifications to the Improvement Plan where appropriate, to address the areas identified as requiring further improvement. A focused audit is planned for March 2023 to check on progress.
66. Recognition is given to a key area for improvement being housing for care leavers, particularly in relation to the suitability of housing offered to care leavers and the locations in which properties are situated. Greater consideration is needed around replicating the same opportunities for care leavers as other young people, including development of a comprehensive holistic support package. As well as requiring practical support, it is recognised that many care experienced young people have lived experience of trauma so it is also important to support their mental and emotional health and well-being. This is explored in further detail at starting at **paragraph 166** of this report.

Term of Reference A – To consider how the Council seeks to secure employment or training for young people with care experience and/or special needs

Education, Employment and Training – Young People in Middlesbrough

67. In accordance with the Learning and Skills Act 2008, local authorities have a duty to ‘encourage, enable or assist young people’s participation in education or training.’
68. Within the Stronger Families Service (also known as Early Help), there is an established, dedicated NEET team, consisting of six staff – three Family Practitioners and three Support Workers – to specifically support **all** young people in Middlesbrough, aged 16 and 17, who are not in education employment or training (often shortened to NEET).
69. The team ensures that all young people who are due to leave school or college (this equates to several thousand each academic year) have a suitable offer of learning by the end of September. This is known as the September Guarantee and can be a place at a collage, a job with suitable training leading to a qualification, or an apprenticeship.
70. In conjunction with the Performance Team, the NEET Team checks information on a weekly basis to identify which young people have received an offer of education, employment or training and contacts those who have not received an offer.
71. The NEET Team continues to track the destinations of young people to offer careers guidance and a placing service to support young people into suitable opportunities. They ensure that all young people take up their offers and commence in their agreed placements. For those young people who do not commence their placement offers, a named worker is assigned to each young person and one to one support is provided to help the young person decide what they want to do and to obtain a suitable placement.
72. In 2021, the September Guarantee rate for Middlesbrough was **96.2%** which was slightly above the England rate of **95.5%** and the North East rate of **95.7%**.
73. In 2021/22, **5.6%** of 16 and 17 year olds in Middlesbrough were NEET (not in education, employment or training). This was slightly higher than the North East average of **5.4%** and the England average of **4.7%**. Middlesbrough ranks fourth out of 11 statistical neighbours.
74. The Team works with a range of learning providers including schools and colleges, apprenticeship providers and Middlesbrough Council’s Community Learning Service.

Education, Employment and Training – Young People with Special Education Needs in Middlesbrough

75. The SEND Code of Practice provides statutory guidance on duties, policies and procedures relating to specific legislation that must be followed by local authorities and other bodies. A significant part of the Code of Practice relates to preparing young people with SEND for adulthood and independence.

76. The Council's SEND Team works with all young people with SEND in Middlesbrough aged between 14 – 25 with a focus on planning for their future and preparing for adulthood by providing them with the necessary skills for independence, employment, community inclusion and good health outcomes. This includes any young person with an EHCP, regardless of whether they attend an academy school. The SEND Team has a good working relationship with all schools and academies, with the key aim of ensuring all young people with SEND progress.
77. The SEND Team works closely with social care colleagues to ensure that person-centred planning takes place with the young person to ensure that their voice is heard and that the right support pathways are put in place. For example, if a young person wanted to do a particular job, all efforts from that point forward would be made to help and support that young person to find suitable employment in that field.
78. All children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are supported at Year 11 with place planning to ensure they have a suitable offer of education, employment or training. The SEND Team ensures that this cohort of young people has the right support to make decisions about their future and ongoing support with education and employment providers.
79. Once the young person's wishes are established (eg to attend college or seek an apprenticeship), the SEND Team considers whether commissioned services are required. Many young people simply want to work and the SEND Team is able to fund providers to offer internships. Funding is provided to offer job coaches in the work place to help young people learn whilst in the job. To date, 180 young people have been supported with internships. This is part of a Tees Valley local authorities' arrangement and planning is undertaken on a multi-agency basis.
80. The local authority provides High Needs Funding to meet the needs of children with SEND and has partnerships with a range of providers including Middlesbrough College, Project Choice, Stockton Riverside College, Prior Pursglove College and Middlesbrough Community Learning.
81. In addition, young people with very complex needs who have a named Children's Social Worker, are discussed at a Transitions Forum with colleagues in Adult Social Care. Careful planning takes place to ensure a smooth transition to Adult Social Care where it is deemed necessary/appropriate and to plan for the young person's ongoing support requirements.

Education, Employment and Training – Young People with Disabilities in Middlesbrough

82. There are three dedicated teams within the Children with Disabilities Service that support young people from the age of 15 years and six months up to 17 years. Again, it is a statutory duty to help prepare these young people for adulthood.
83. Children with Disabilities has a multi-disciplinary team in place to undertake a new assessment of the young person, depending on their status, before their 16th birthday.
84. The Transitions Forum considers and determines which adult social care service is most appropriate to meet the needs of each young person and for those that are most at risk (for example from exploitation), a transition to the vulnerable adults service is likely to be the most appropriate route.

85. The Children with Disabilities Service works closely with Adult Social Care to undertake a capacity assessment to ascertain whether the individual is able to make decisions as adults. This work is carried out in conjunction with parents, the young person and courts to ensure their needs and rights are met.
86. Extensive work takes place in relation to all transitional arrangements for young people to plan for the best outcomes possible and parallel planning is always undertaken to cover all eventualities.
87. Through speaking to the young people, their wishes regarding the types of jobs that they wanted to do were identified. The Council commissions a number of post-16 education providers to provide education to prepare young people with a disability for adulthood, including:-
- Project Choice
 - Askham Bryan College
 - Beverley School
 - Prior Pursglove College
 - Middlesbrough College
 - Priority Woods School and Arts College
 - Middlesbrough Community Learning
88. Study programmes include qualifications from entry Level to Level 3; supported internships; skills for employment and independence and also engaging with employers, careers and work experience.
89. Supported internships are funded by the Council and this is a study programme that is carried out in a workplace. A number of employers are funded to provide a work placement for a young person with a disability. There is a curriculum in place to support the young person which includes pastoral activities, holistic programme and travel training.

Opportunities at Middlesbrough Council

90. Middlesbrough Council is a Level 3 Disability Confident Employer and is committed to supporting disabled people into employment both within the organisation and within the community.
91. The “50 Futures programme” arranged by Middlesbrough Community Learning, offers opportunities for work experience and internships. The programme works across Council departments to offer work-based placements with some opportunities leading to full and part-time employment.
92. Last year, eight young people with a disability or learning difficulty moved into employment, one of which was at Middlesbrough Council.
93. A small number of young people are also supported into apprenticeships. The CwD and SEND/Inclusion Services work with Community Learning to ensure that EHCPs are reviewed and to support those who are eligible to apply for ‘Access to Work’ funding from the DoE. There are strong outcomes for those with CwD experience.

Education, Employment and Training – Young People Leaving Care in Middlesbrough

94. As previously referenced at **paragraph 38** of this report, a care leaver is defined as ‘a young person who has been in the care of the local authority for a period of 13 weeks or more, spanning their 16th birthday, up to the age of 25’. The Pathways (Leaving Care) Service has a statutory duty to support care leavers to independence. Details regarding the support provided, and co-ordinated with partners, by the Pathways Service is set out in this report starting at **paragraph 41**.
95. Every young person leaving care needs a transition period during which to focus on developing skills for independence and to prepare for adulthood. A young person in the care of the local authority has a Social Worker up to the age of 18, at which point the young person is assigned a Personal Advisor from the Pathways (Leaving Care) Service. As detailed in **paragraphs 45 and 46** of this report, a Needs Assessment is completed with every young person followed by the development of a Pathways Plan for each care leaver, setting out the interventions and support services they require to prepare them for adulthood.
96. The Pathways (Leaving Care) Team provides care leavers with structured support focussing on helping them into education, employment or training.
97. A NEET (not in education, employment or training) Panel, made up of Personal Advisors, Social Workers, Work Readiness Team, Youth Offending Service and education providers, meets regularly to discuss how to best help and support those young people who are more difficult to place in education, employment or training. Members heard that work is ongoing to broaden the membership of the NEET Panel to include other potential employment providers and services such as CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services). Mental health issues and substance misuse are two of the biggest obstacles to young people moving into education, employment or training and it is hoped that broadening the membership of the NEET Panel to reflect this and to provide more specialised support where required would assist.
98. Work readiness support is provided to care leavers, on a one-to-one basis, including help to produce CVs, practice interviews, access to bursaries, purchasing college equipment and clothing for interviews, etc. and ensuring that care leavers are guaranteed an interview for jobs and apprenticeships. Middlesbrough Council provides apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers and currently has four young people in placements across the authority.
99. Young people are also supported to gain work experience opportunities and support with travelling to interviews and attending local job fairs and college open days. This links in with the Virtual School.
100. The Panel also heard that 11 young people had gone on to University and were helped with their accommodation needs.
101. In summary, the Pathways Service provides advice, guidance and support to care leavers in liaison with a number of partners, including:-
- A ‘NEET Panel’ (not in employment, education and training), Chaired by the Head of the Virtual School, bringing together partners to provide guidance to staff on how best to support young people with employment, education and training opportunities. It also considers each young

person identified as being 'NEET' and explores ways to support them into employment, education or training.

- Work Readiness Support. One to one support provided by the Work Readiness Team.
- Guaranteed interview for jobs and apprenticeships. Middlesbrough Council guarantees interviews into apprenticeships and jobs for those with care experience.
- Support to: access bursaries, purchase college equipment, produce CVs, purchase clothing for interviews.
- Help to understand rights and entitlements.
- Work Experience opportunities. (The Council's 50 Futures Team offers work experience in certain areas).
- Additional financial support to ensure that there is a financial benefit to working.
- Support with travel to interviews. (Young people can be transported to and from interviews where required or helped to obtain a suitable bus pass).
- Support to attend local job fairs and college open days.
- Work with Adult Care Social Workers to access services for young people with disabilities.

Middlesbrough Community Learning (MCL)

102. Middlesbrough Community Learning (MCL) is Middlesbrough Council's learning, skills, apprenticeship and employability service. As part of its offer, MCL supports vulnerable young people into further education, training or employment by offering high quality learning opportunities for people of all ages and abilities through a wide number of courses.

103. The MCL offer includes:-

- Programmes for young people, including supported internships and study programme
- Apprenticeships
- 50 Futures
- Youth Hub
- Youth Employment Initiative
- Support for Employers
- Support for Learners
- Information, advice and guidance for parents, carers, social workers and personal assistants.

Post-16 Alternative Provision

104. MCL delivers post-16 alternative provision for vulnerable young people, including those with Special Educational Needs. This consists of two programmes, both of which have produced some amazing success stories, and both predominantly delivered from the Lingfield Learning Centre, Coulby Newham:-

- Study Programme (for 16-19 year olds)
- Supported Internships (for 16-24 year olds)

Study Programme

105. The Study programme is available to 16-19 year olds, or up to the age of 25 if the young person has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and runs for a full academic year (September to July). Its main aim is to enhance employability skills by ensuring students are ready for employment. The

programme is designed to engage with students who are not quite ready for the employment market - for whatever reason - and to support them in gaining work experience/vocational placements and enhance their chances in the employment market by developing their employability skills, including English and Maths qualifications where none had been gained previously.

106. Students must be aged between 16 – 19 years old and have left secondary school and not be 19 before 1st August within that calendar year.
107. The programme offers the following opportunities, all of which are tailored to suit the needs of the individual:-
- A) Vocational Qualification & Vocational Placements (in the student's desired vocation)
 - B) Employability Qualification
 - C) Personal and Social Development Qualification
 - D) Maths and English
108. This programme helps to reduce the number of young people who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) within Middlesbrough. Community Learning works with all aspects of children's services to ensure Middlesbrough's young people have access to the support and opportunities they need to develop and progress.

Supported Internship

109. The main aim of the supported internship programme is to provide the learner with a meaningful work experience placement with a trusted local employer. Participants must be aged 16-24 and have an EHCP. This programme also runs for a full academic year (September to July) and enables access to:-
- Work placement
 - Maths and English
 - Vocational Qualification
 - Employability Qualification
 - Preparation for Adulthood and Personal and Social Development – all of which are tailored to the individual.
110. Students are usually ready for work once they had successfully completed the assessment process.

Lingfield Learning Centre Programmes

111. Both the Study Programme and Supported Internship Programmes are predominantly delivered from the Lingfield Learning Centre in Coulby Newham which is now in its seventh year. All students applying for the programmes are interviewed by the Post-16 Alternative Provision Co-ordinator and the programmes are delivered by a dedicated team of seven staff who ensure bespoke learning opportunities for some of the most vulnerable young people, including those with care experience. The team works closely with the virtual school and NEET service within Stronger Families, as well as other Social Care colleagues and Youth Offending Service.

112. The level of education attainment aimed for by the students on the programmes depends on the individual. Courses for English and Maths form part of the offer for both programmes ranging from Entry level 1 to 3 and functional skills levels 1 and 2 for those who had not already attained GCSE English and Maths at level 4 or above. These City and Guilds courses are recognised by employers in the same way as GCSE qualifications. Students are also provided with life skills support to prepare for independence.
113. The Lingfield Centre has a maximum capacity of 30 students. There are currently 25 students enrolled in the programmes. Of those 25 students, 16 have an EHCP and five have a SEND Plan.
114. The Post-16 Alternative Provision Team will actively work with SEND and other Social Care Services and other training providers in Middlesbrough to secure the right learning package and support for individuals in the event that Lingfield reached capacity. They would not be put to one side and forgotten about.
115. Feedback from students is positive with the majority expressing the view that they find the Lingfield Learning Centre to be a calm, safe space.
116. Students with SEND are referred to MCL from the SEND Service for consideration to establish the individual's abilities and requirements. All individuals are considered and provided with bespoke learning based on their needs and aspirations, coupled with a holistic support package for learners and their families/guardians.
117. Panel Members had the opportunity to read real-life case studies which included testimonies from individuals who are, or had been, part of a Study Programme or Supported Internship at Lingfield - including details on the individual's background, support provided to them at Lingfield and the impact this had had on their long term employment outcome.

Achievements – Lingfield Learning Centre

118. In 2021/22, the following achievements were made by students at the Lingfield Learning Centre:-
- Achievement results rate - **91.7%**. (This was above the Service target rate of 90%) and a **5.1%** year on year **improvement**.
 - **94.4%** success in students gaining a work placement (through quality partnership working – internal and external).
 - **36%** of learners successfully gained employment (with only one student remaining NEET due to circumstances outside of the student's control).
 - The rate of progression into employment was **36.4%** and **54.5%** progressed into further training.
 - **42%** of the SEN cohort successfully gained employment.

Apprenticeships

119. MCL also operates an apprenticeship programme, delivered by a small team, of seven staff, including a Learning Mentor.

120. MCL offers a wide range of apprenticeships within Middlesbrough Council, recruiting around 100 apprentices every year, with some ring-fenced specifically for care leavers.
121. Entry requirements for apprenticeship placements vary depending upon the level of the placement but all require Maths and English at either level 1 or 2, or GCSE grade 4 or above. Individuals with an EHCP can be put forward for an apprenticeship at any level, depending on the employer, as some roles are not reliant on Maths or English.
122. MCL also recruits and delivers apprenticeships for high quality, local employers within the Tees Valley, with all apprenticeship vacancies advertised via the National Apprenticeship website, on social media and on the Community Learning website.
123. All apprentices are offered support from the recruitment centre to prepare them for interviews with employers. MCL works closely with Personal Advisors and Social Workers and can advocate on behalf of individuals with employers to provide them with as much support as possible to achieve.
124. Where it is felt that the individual is not ready for an apprenticeship placement they can be referred to the Youth Employment Initiative or Adult Education to ensure that they reach the point where they are ready to start work.
125. External services are sometimes sourced to meet an individual's needs where they cannot be met from within the MCL Service. This ensures that the individual is supported as much as possible to achieve their goals.
126. Some of the agencies that learners can be referred to or signposted to included:-
- Impact on Tees Mental Health
 - Hart Gables
 - National Careers Service
 - Welfare Benefits
 - SARC
 - Survivors
 - MIND
 - Stop Smoking Service
 - Thirteen
 - CAMHS
127. Apprenticeship courses run from 15 – 18 months. This can sometimes be difficult for some individuals to remain invested in, however, breaks can be offered.
128. One issue identified as a problem for some young people who are Care Leavers or NEET is that they often have no form of formal identification such as a passport, national insurance number or birth certificate. The MCL Team will support the young person to obtain this but it can take a considerable amount of time, however, staff ensure they keep in touch with the young person and support them into their chosen pathway.

129. In terms of supporting care leavers where they might have additional barriers to working, such as mental health problems or drug misuse, the MCL teams make every effort to work alongside the right services to help the individual overcome this in order to help them go on to gain employment via one of the programmes described. In addition, a care leavers' bursary of £1,000 (one-off payment) is available.
130. Care leavers who are NEET are discussed at the NEET Clinic – of which both the Apprenticeship Co-ordinator and Post-16 Alternative Provision Co-ordinator are members – to plan how to best support them.
131. The Apprenticeship Team and the Post-16 Alternative Provision Team work closely together to ensure that learners are provided with the right support to gain work and life experience and preparation for interviews.
132. Where individuals experience difficulties at the recruitment centre, the learning mentor discusses any issues with them and will make a potential employer aware of those issues, for example, it may be that the employer needed to ask questions in a certain way in order for the individual to understand. The learning mentor can also help young people to plan how they will travel to work and how to ensure they arrive on time.
133. Once a young person had completed their study programme and moved into employment or higher education, they are monitored for six months afterwards by MCL and many young people often kept in touch with the Team after this period as they felt comfortable in approaching them for further advice or support. Where the young person did not move into employment/higher education, MCL would continue to support placements in a person-centred way, tailored to suit the individual's needs and circumstances. MCL actively works with any other agencies required to support the individual to achieve their goals.

134. **96%** of MCL learners went on to gain employment or moved into further education.

Achievements – Apprenticeship Programme (MCL)

135. Seven care leavers had been helped into apprenticeships, two of whom had achieved 100% distinction criteria in their external assessments.
136. The apprenticeship achievement rate through MCL was **76%**. This is significantly higher than the national achievement rate of **52%**. Middlesbrough's target is to achieve a 90% success rate.
137. 655 apprenticeships were approved from level 2 up to level 7, so there was something out there for everyone, but individuals must first have level 1 maths and English.

50 Futures Programme

138. The 50 Futures programme provides a practical work experience placement with Middlesbrough Council or its trusted partners for up to a maximum of 8 weeks. The aim of the placement is to provide an insight into a paid job role, for young people aged over 16 with little professional

experience. All areas across the Council are encouraged to offer a placement opportunity for a young person.

139. The 50 Futures Programme Co-ordinator co-ordinates all placements within the Council and external placements, with the majority of the referrals made to 50 Futures coming from the Apprenticeship and Post-16 Alternative Provision Teams.
140. Work placements outside of the 50 Futures programme are also used and between all of the community learning teams, every effort is made to find a suitable placement for the individual.
141. The Panel heard that it can be challenging to secure work experience placements within the Council as it can be time consuming, however, mentors or job coaches support the young person in their work placements within the Council and the MCL Teams support them with skill scans and job descriptions and helping the provider to be detailed and specific about the tasks they want the individuals to undertake. Progress is being made and it is hoped that wider engagement across the Council can be achieved.

Term of Reference B - To look at ways in which young people with care experience are supported and encouraged to actively participate – with service development and part within their community

Community engagement/Inclusion

142. Social isolation has been recognised as an issue for young people leaving care and the Pathways Social Group was established to help combat this. The group meets weekly at the dedicated Pathways hub and operates on a 'drop in' basis, therefore, the numbers attending each week can vary. The group enjoys various activities such as movie nights and 'cook and eat' sessions which are particularly popular. The Group had also held several social events including a day trip to Flamingo Land (attended by 12 young people) and a Platinum Jubilee barbeque (attended by around 20 young people).
143. Pathways staff had provided a Christmas lunch on Christmas Day at the Pathways hub and had transported the young people there. This was very well received and was important for those young people who might otherwise have spent Christmas Day alone.
144. The Care Leavers Forum was established with the aim of supporting care experienced young people's views and voices to be heard to help shape service development and improvement but has struggled to engage young people – having around four regular members. However, the Participation Team is working hard to expand the membership of this and other groups with more creative and inventive ways of taking part.

Participation and Engagement

145. Middlesbrough's Participation Team facilitate open, safe and inclusive spaces for young people with care experience to meet to express their views regarding the changes they would like to see to improve their own experiences and those of their peers. The Team supports young people to share their views with key decision-makers and professionals, all of whom will act on what has been expressed in order to positively change services to meet young peoples' needs.
146. The Participation Team runs several groups, that meet fortnightly, and supports them to design and deliver engagement events to capture the wider voice of young people in Middlesbrough:-
- 'We Matter' (Middlesbrough Children in Care Council) – for 10-16 year olds.
 - 'Care Leavers Forum' – for 16-25 year olds.
 - 'My Voice Matters' – for young people with additional needs.
 - 'Youth Council' – for all young people in Middlesbrough.
147. The 'My Voice Matters' group is currently designing the next Youth Voice Conference 2023 and the 'Youth Council' plans to engage with young people within schools to work on issues identified in their manifesto.
148. As at December 2022, activity taking place with young people, included:-

- The Participation Team – had developed a work plan incorporating all of the work it was undertaking with all of the groups. In January 2023, the Team would begin working with all the young people to co-produce the ‘Participation Strategy’.
- ‘We Matter’ – developing its 2023 work plan. This would include regular meetings, holding four engagement events, meeting with the Executive Director of Children’s Services, the Director of Children’s Care and other key decision-makers. Also meeting directly with Corporate Parents as part of the Corporate Parenting Board and the Children and Young People’s Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel.
- ‘Care Leaver’s Forum’ – developing its 2023 work plan. This would include meeting regularly, supporting the celebration event in April 2023 and developing the Local Offer for care leavers.
- ‘My Voice Matters’ – developing its 2023 work plan, including meeting regularly and identifying key areas it wished to focus on, and meeting key decision-makers.
- ‘Youth Council’ – developing its 2023 work plan, including meeting regularly, working on its Manifesto and designing a ‘Big Takeover’ event.

149. It is anticipated that the impact of all the ongoing activity will be that:-

- More young people in Middlesbrough are offered opportunities to have a voice, to be heard and encourage real potential for services to positively change to meet their needs.
- Young people say being part of these groups makes them feel valued and listened to.
- Key decision-makers are able to hear directly from young people to influence their decision-making and work towards co-producing services with them and for them.

150. The Participation Team, and the young people it works with, want Corporate Parents to hear directly from young people to ensure that services are responsive and meeting young people’s needs. It is important that as many people as possible are engaged and hear first-hand about the challenges young people face.

151. The Participation Team is collaborating with care leavers to redesign the Local Offer (as previously mentioned at **paragraph 48** of this report). The majority of Care Leavers stated they did not read the information given to them and their preference would be a digital version of the core offer.

152. The Team has subsequently linked up with Middlesbrough College to work with students who are working with Middlesbrough’s care leavers to produce an animation containing the information around support available, particularly around where they lived, financial support, health, etc.

153. In addition the Team is working with Pathways and partner agencies around the current offer to examine whether it is working well and plans to meet housing providers. It hoped to hold an event in the spring involving key partners to undertake a piece of work and to look at the positives and negatives.

154. As part of the Scrutiny Panel’s evidence-gathering, the Participation Team had undertaken a piece of work with young people from the ‘We Matter’ (Children in Care Council) group through a

questionnaire that it had developed seeking young people's views around their experiences of care, focusing on the positives, challenges in their past, present and future and how they felt supported in preparing to become independent.

155. Eleven young people completed the questionnaires, which were shared with Panel Members, and four of those young people attended the Scrutiny Panel meeting on 20 December 2022 to talk about their responses directly.
156. The young peoples' views gathered from the questionnaires provided the following information:-

Past

157. The young people were asked to think about how they had been positively impacted by a role model or someone who had encouraged or inspired them and who had also supported them to overcome any challenges.
158. They identified parents and family members, foster carers, children's home staff; social workers, support staff in employment/training settings, teachers and teaching staff as positive and inspirational role models and people who had encouraged them to overcome challenges such as ensuring their views were heard; consistency in social workers; settling into school; finding something they enjoyed doing; overcoming negative thoughts and feelings.

Present

159. The young people were asked what they feel is going well for them; how they are working towards independence and what form of education, employment or training they are currently in. They were also asked to think about their current independence status and whether they are happy with the way things are going; how people around them are helping them and whether they are able to express how they are feeling.
160. In terms of what is going well for them and how they are working towards independence, the young people identified areas such as making new friends; learning a new language; making progress in school, training or employment; working towards qualifications and learning skills such as cooking, self-care and budgeting their own finances.

Future

161. The young people were asked about their aspirations; whether they feel they will succeed; how those around them can support them to achieve their aspirations and whether they feel they will be ready for independence. In terms of future challenges, the young people were asked to think about what challenges they might encounter and who they can turn to for help and support.
162. The young people identified a range of aspirations including gaining qualifications they are working towards; achieving employment in various career paths; attending university; learning to drive; owning their own home. Most young people identified teachers, support staff, social workers,

personal advisors and foster carers as people they would turn to for help/support to overcome any challenges.

Term of Reference C - To consider, where it is appropriate for a young person to move to supported accommodation or independent living, the options available and the support provided to young people and their families/carers (where appropriate) to prepare and plan for independent living

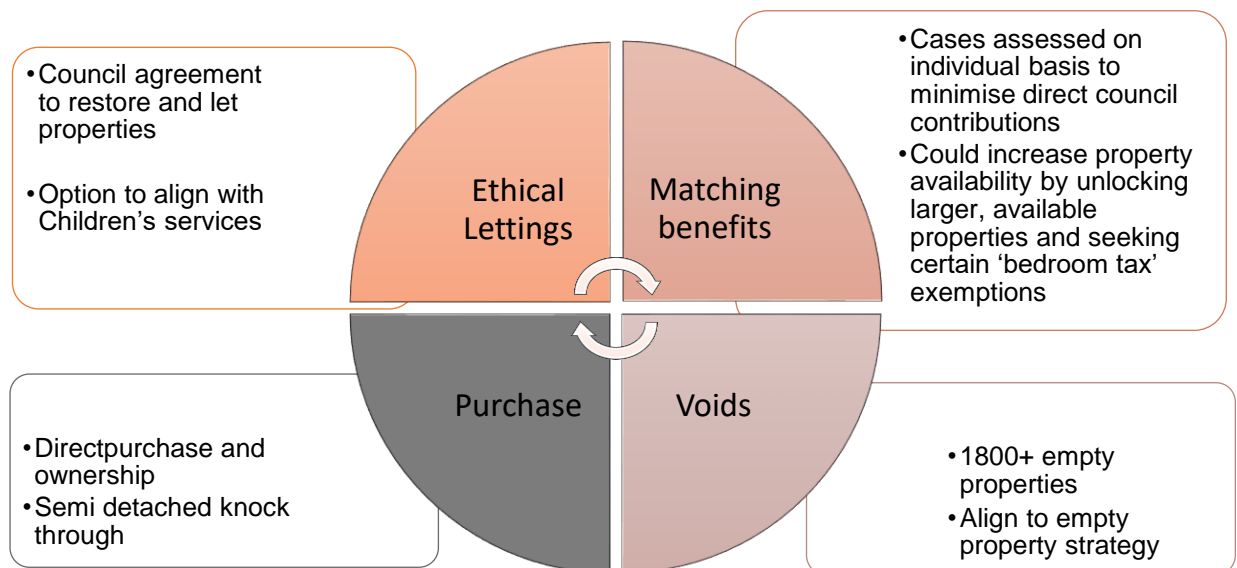
163. Once a young person in care turned 17, focus was placed on planning for their post-18 future, when they would no longer be a 'Looked After Child'.
164. The Pathways Team supports young people with their preferred post-18 option, such as:-
- 'Staying Put' - this arrangement allows young people to remain with their foster carers beyond the age of 18.
 - Access to Supported Lodgings provision – working with accommodation providers. (Some young people moved to supported lodgings provision prior to becoming 18, with a support plan, if appropriate, however, no young person will be placed in such provision before their 16th birthday).
 - Young people's housing panel – supports access to multiple housing options.
 - Support with Council tax exemption (up to age 21, with plans to move to age 25).
 - Support with setting up home allowance. (Help to buy equipment such as white goods and furniture up to £2,000 with responsible spending advice provided).
 - Support with removal costs.
 - An in-house unregulated support accommodation provision - Daniel Court - for young people over the age of 16, comprising of self-contained flats for up to nine young people.
 - A regulated in-house care provision – Rosecroft - for young people over the age of 16 to support a gradual transition to an independent flat where they will be supported to be responsible for the tenancy and live with floating support at a pace meeting their needs. (Rosecroft is able to support up to five young people and is designed for those whose independence skills are less developed. Once the young person feels comfortable they are supported to move into a flat to live independently but with continued support. Positive outcomes have been achieved for young people through both provisions at Daniel Court and Rosecroft).
165. The Pathways Service works closely with housing providers to ensure that appropriate, secure accommodation is identified for young people and these are considered by the Young People's Housing Panel. There are some challenges in appropriately placing some young people independently, including a small cohort of young people with very complex needs following traumatic experiences, who have found it difficult to hold down a tenancy. It can be difficult for housing providers to identify suitable accommodation in such cases where young people display risky behaviours, however, there are performance measures in place to ensure those young people are well-supported and monitored.

Future Provision

166. Historically, there have been difficulties in securing accommodation for young people with care experience which has resulted in the use of expensive placements. It is clear that a new menu of opportunity, particularly for cohorts of care leavers and children in care is required.
167. The cost of a young person leaving care into mainstream accommodation is around **£5,500** per week per placement. This is a total of approximately **£14.3 million** for **50** young people per year. This is in comparison to the approximate cost of a regular tenancy agreement rental of **£430** per week. (This equates to an approximate cost differential of more than **£13 million** per year based on **50** young people).
168. Projected calculations show that the proposals can achieve a significant cost avoidance to the Council.
169. Proposals for a new accommodation project are currently being formulated across several Council directorates, with external partners, which will provide an opportunity to respond to the challenges faced by Children's Services, whilst also addressing the number of empty town-wide properties. A business case will be prepared by the Council and its partner(s).
170. The main areas of focus for the project in its entirety are as follows:-
- Those with no recourse to public funds – families who are in the process of an asylum claim or had a failed claim decision.
Requirement – a number of home options for small families required on a temporary basis where accommodation is needed pending a claim.
 - Crisis situation: Crash pad – short term/temporary requirements which allow a domestic or social situation to defuse prior to return. Often require distance or out of area.
Requirement – two or three homes for short term lets.
 - Looked after children: bespoke arrangements – Local authority unable to source a regulated package through fostering or residential – need to put in place a staff package to look after a child long term and for children with complex needs.
Requirement – three or four bed homes for children and a staff team for several weeks or months at a time. Two staff required for up to four children = four placements = six bed home.
 - Care leavers – children in residential care up to 18 – leaving care and transitional arrangements for young people, ie independent tenancies.
Requirement – smaller homes for care leavers to live alone and cluster flats for 2/3 young people.
 - Direct Delivery of residential homes – avoidance of significant expense – local authority owned.
Requirement – larger properties up to six bedrooms which can be converted to care homes (subject to planning and consultations).

Care Leavers

171. In terms of care leavers, the proposals will provide a good opportunity for some 'quick wins' as well as establishing a long term strategy to ensure ongoing cost savings.
172. Dialogue has commenced with Thirteen Group to consider potential accommodation options, including ensuring that properties were in the right locations to house care leavers. There will also be close liaison with the Benefit Service to align costs.
173. Housing providers, such as Thirteen Group, will seek security of tenure and income with the possibility of a Service Level Agreement for a number of properties exclusively for care leavers and progressing to a tenancy for the young person at the right time, thus removing financial burden to the Council and providing a life cycle solution for Middlesbrough's young people.
174. Each young person would be provided with holistic support to ensure they feel well supported and prepared to live independently and to ensure they succeed. This will include:-
 - Advice and support regarding benefit entitlements.
 - Access to short term financial support, where needed, for example help with cost of furnishings and white goods.
 - Advice and guidance on personal financial budgeting.
 - Signposting to a range of support services as and when required, with all partner agencies (eg property queries, health issues, etc).
 - Advice and support to ensure they met the terms and conditions of their tenancy agreement.
175. Careful vetting of properties will be required to ensure that they are up to standard, or brought up to standard, and situated in suitable locations, for example, not placing vulnerable young people in areas known to have high levels of anti-social behaviour or drug misuse. Children's Services will have priority and the final say as to whether a property is suitable for each young person.
176. Around **50** young people with care experience are approaching their 18th birthdays, with around **20** turning 18 between September and November 2023, therefore, it is crucial to be able to plan for this through the accommodation proposals, in conjunction with partners.
177. The project also identifies a range of other opportunities, including:-



178. Going forward, the following actions have been identified:-

- Options Appraisal with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), however, discussions currently taking place with Thirteen to look at scenarios and working towards a menu of opportunities to address the issues.
- Activate Nominations Strategy – solution to be developed that would align to all areas and maximise use of available properties for both new builds and existing stock.
- Purchasing Opportunities – affordable solutions when external offerings are not suitable.
- Empty properties strategy – bringing empty properties back into use to address accommodation shortfalls.
- The above actions will also support other areas such as Adult Social Care/Homeless where accommodation is providing an increased burden to Council finances.

Term of Reference D - To examine how care experienced young people are supported with budgeting their finances and how they are supported to ensure their physical and emotional health needs are met

Support with Finances and Budgeting

179. In terms of supporting young people to become financially resilient, the ideal time to start supporting young people with budgeting skills was around 12-14 years, starting with saving pocket money into a bank account. Social Workers and family members can discuss this with the young person and support them to do this.
180. The following financial support is provided for care leavers in Middlesbrough:-
- Local Council Tax exemption up to the age of 25, a setting up home allowance of up to £2,000 and support with removal costs.
 - A personal allowance of £66.66 per week for young people aged over 16 years living in supported accommodation. (This is in lieu of benefit entitlement. There is a structured programme of independence support for young people living in Daniel Court and Rosecroft which includes budgeting skills and one to one advice from Personal Advisors).
 - Financial assistance for university students, higher education bursary including a tuition free loan and maintenance loan from student finance departments. An additional bursary is provided by the local authority three times per year.
 - A weekly allowance of £66.66 for university students living away from home.
 - A further £40 housing support grant to assist with the purchase of groceries.
181. For young people living in supported accommodation, such as Daniel Court or Rosecroft, a contribution towards household bills (including fuel and food) is required and this is deducted from the young person's benefit allowance. These budgeting skills are developed with the young person on a weekly basis with their Key Worker to ensure that by the age of 18 they have a sound understanding of budgeting their own finances and are prepared for independence.

Health

182. The Pathways Service supports young people leaving care with their physical and mental health needs in various ways, including:-
- Provision of a dedicated CAMHS Worker (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service) based within the Pathways Service, offering additional emotional wellbeing support. This has been recognised as good practice nationally.
 - Support with referrals to other agencies.
 - Support to attend medical appointments and speak to the doctor. (Can advocate with health professionals on behalf of the young person with their consent).
 - Free access to Middlesbrough leisure services.
 - A health passport with key information about the young person's health. (Once the young person reaches 18 years, the Children Looked After Health Service provides them with their health document containing their medical history, family history, etc)
 - Access to C Cards.
 - Support to register with a doctor, dentist and optician.
 - Advice and guidance regarding LGBT issues and signposting to support services.

- Work with allocated Adult Care Social Worker or Health Lead Professional if young adult with disabilities.

Public Health

183. There is a very broad needs base in terms of how health partners support young people to adulthood and independence and how their physical and emotional health needs, particularly those in care/care leavers, are met.
184. A considerable amount of work had been undertaken to support children in schools in relation to mental health with the Headstart Programme now being delivered by Public Health in all Middlesbrough schools.
185. The Headstart Programme aims to develop resilience and emotional well-being through peer support, undertaking specific work in the classroom and in school assemblies.
186. In terms of young people with care experience, Healthy Child programmes are in place run by the Tees Valley Children in Care Service in conjunction with Social Care. This supports young people to plan for leaving care, undertaking health reviews and assessing the health needs of young people.
187. The team works with appropriate support services where required to ensure all of the young person's health needs are met and that appropriate services were put in place where required.
188. The Tees Valley Children in Care Service provides a very specific service co-ordinating health assessments and reviews for care experienced young people and offers appropriate support to families and carers and liaises with outreach services to address reactive areas.

Tees Valley Children in Care Team – Harrogate & District NHS Foundation Trust (HDFT)

189. From 1 April 2022 responsibility of initial health assessments (IHAs) and review health assessments (RHAs) for South Tees NHS Trust was amalgamated into a Tees Valley Children in Care contract.
190. HDFT is responsible for the timely co-ordination of IHAs (including gathering consent and pertinent health and social information on a child entering the care system to inform the IHA appointment). The IHA appointment is completed by the acute hospital trust and disseminated to social care.
191. It is the responsibility of the Tees Valley Children in Care (TV CiC) service to co-ordinate and undertake RHAs for any child in care in Middlesbrough. TV CiC practitioners also undertake RHAs for a child placed out of area within a 30-mile radius of their home address.
192. Any identified health needs are passed to the 0-19 service which includes health visitors and school nurses to provide ongoing support. Where there is a bespoke health requirement, for example an issue with emotional health and well-being, the case-holder is responsible for supporting the child and co-ordinating any additional package of support.

193. As of February 2023, there were between 50-60 young people open to the TVCiC Team in Middlesbrough alone, with approximately 12 young people due to become care leavers before the end of the year.
194. All children and young people in care should be registered with a GP, a dentist and an optician up to the age of 18, or 25 if they have an identified SEN. There is no budget within the current contract for the TVCiC to follow this up, however, where the Service becomes aware of a young person who is not registered, this is identified in their health care plan to be rectified.

School-based Immunisation Pathway

195. The TVCiC service has implemented a School Based Immunisation & Children in Care Pathway to ensure the immunisation uptake for children in care is satisfactory. This was implemented in May 2022 and has resulted in successfully administering all outstanding immunisations to 12 children in care.

Dental Pilot Pathway

196. The Panel heard that a pilot scheme had been launched in January 2023 across the Tees Valley to ensure that any young person who had not been seen by a dentist within the last six months could be referred to a dentist that had signed up to the pilot.
197. The figure for children/young people in Middlesbrough who were not registered with a GP when they first became open to the TV CiC is minimal and currently stands at around **1.6%**.
198. In relation to those not registered with a dentist, the figure for Middlesbrough was **11.2%**, prior to the start of the pilot scheme, however, this figure could be slightly skewed as the performance indicator marker does not ask when the young person last saw a dentist, therefore, it may be that they had seen a dentist but were not registered with one or that they had been automatically deregistered with a dentist because they had not been seen within six months.

Initial Health Assessment (IHA)

199. All children entering into the care of the local authority must have an initial health assessment within 20 days to ascertain an overall view of their physical and emotional health needs and to ensure that they are registered with a GP and dentist. A Health and Care Plan is also devised.
200. The TV CiC service co-ordinates the completion of any Initial Health Assessments and monitors the completion and reporting of these by Community Paediatricians from South Tees NHS Trust.
201. TV CiC are notified by the Local Authority of a child entering the care system and the team collates notification consent and requests an IHA appointment with South Tees NHS Foundation Trust. All IHA assessments continue to be undertaken face to face.
202. The acute hospital trust is then responsible for assessing the child, completing the report and disseminating to TV CiC and to the local authority.

203. The figures below show the number of IHAs requested in Middlesbrough and the number of which were completed on time within the 20 day timescale:-
- Quarter One (April to June 2022) - **61** requests, **27** completed within timescales (**44%**).
 - Quarter Two (July to September 2022) – **46** requests, **37** completed within timescales (**80%**).
 - Quarter Three (October to December 2022) – **42** requests, **22** completed within timescales (**52%**).
165. Reasons for IHAs not being completed within the 20 day timescale include:-
- Delay in notification and medical consent.
 - Child was not brought to IHA appointment.
 - Out of area CiC teams not performing IHA within statutory timescales.
204. There have been significant, ongoing challenges in relation to IHA compliance which HDFT, the local authority and the acute hospital trust recognise and are working together to improve and rectify the situation.
205. All three partners meet on a weekly basis to discuss any outstanding IHA appointments, establish whether additional clinic appointments are required and investigate the reasons why a child is not brought to the appointment. The Tees Valley CiC have notified the local authority that a delay in providing notification consents creates a delay in the child being booked to attend for an IHA.
206. It remains the responsibility of the Social Worker to notify the child's parent/carer of the appointment details. If the appointment needs to be cancelled or rearranged for any reason, this must be agreed by the Service Manager.

Review Health Assessment (RHA)

207. Following the initial health assessment, children and young people in care have regular review health assessments in line with statutory guidance 'Promoting the Health of Looked After Children' (DfE DoH 2015). The RHA is carried out by a nurse within the Tees Valley Children in Care Team every six months for children aged five and under. Children and young people aged five and older have an RHA annually.
208. All RHAs are undertaken at a face to face contact, usually in the child's home, although TVCiC will carry out the review at a venue of the child's request.
209. Compliance with completing RHAs for young people in Middlesbrough within timescales are as follows:-
- Quarter One (April to June 2022) – **115** requests, **78** completed within timescales (**67%**).
 - Quarter Two (July to September 2022) – **104** requests, **86** completed within timescales (**82%**).

- Quarter Three (October to December 2022) – **127** requests, **110** completed within timescales (**86%**).

210. Reasons for RHAs not being completed within timescales include:-

- Delay in receiving new placement notification from Social Worker/Changes to placement.
- Failed attempts to contact young person/carer.
- Out of area CiC team not undertaking RHA within statutory timescales.
- Placement procedure and workload pressures of Tees Valley CiC Mobilisation.

Health Passport

211. Once the young person reached the age of 15, the Tees Valley Children in Care Team start to discuss the individual's Care Plan and review health assessments and amalgamate all of the information into a 'Health Passport'. The Health Passport is provided to the young person at around 17 and a half years of age.
212. A Health Passport is a summary of a young person's medical history, including details of their GP, dentist, optician, any attendances at A&E, childhood immunisations, and family medical history. All of this information is collated once the young person becomes 16 and is discussed with them at their final health review assessment at age 17 at which point the information from the final HRA is also be added to the passport.
213. In Middlesbrough, it was decided that all young people would be given their Health Passport automatically whereas in some areas of the country the young person's consent to accept the passport is required. This ensures that every young person in Middlesbrough is provided with their Health Passport Making it easy for them to look at their summary health information at any point in the future. The Health Passport is also provided to the young person's GP and will remain on their GP record. The young person was still required to give their consent, however, to share their passport with their Social Worker, therefore, if they did not give consent for this it could not be shared with the Social Worker.
214. The Health Passport is essentially a condensed summary of the individual's full health records presented in an understandable user-friendly format. The IT system used to record health information by GPs, System One, is not user-friendly for non-professionals and generates excessive amounts of paper to print off any records. This is another reason why the Health Passport is provided automatically to the individual.
215. In relation to children and young people who become adopted, the System One database closes in respect of that young person at the point they are adopted, however, TV CiC do provide a health summary containing details of the young person's birth (date, place, delivery, weight), family health history, etc so that there is a record allowing health professionals to have background information regarding the young person in order to know the best way of supporting them. There is currently no

national guidance in relation to this, however, it is something that was due to be examined by NHS England prior to the Covid pandemic.

Term of Reference E - To look at how young people with care experience and/or additional needs are supported to become more independent in travelling to school/college/other education settings/places of employment, or to help them become more independent with travelling socially

Travel Training

216. Middlesbrough Council's Independent Travel Training programme is supported by the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF), delivered by the Council's Integrated Transport Unit (ITU), either on a one-to-one basis or as a group session within a school.
217. The scheme is primarily aimed at young people in Middlesbrough who are likely to need transport via a taxi to school or college, or who are thought to be especially vulnerable and is available to eligible Post-16 young people with an identified SEND.
218. Independent Travel Training (ITT) provides tailored, practical help individuals learn how to travel via public transport, on foot or by bicycle. The programme aims to help people travel in a safe and independent way to their place of employment or education, or to leisure venues.
219. Travel training aims to provide the individual with the confidence to use public transport, demonstrate road safety awareness and ensure they are able to travel by themselves without confusion or anxiety. ITT involves being taken on practical journeys by a travel trainer who highlights important aspects of travel, and the rules of road safety, personal safety and what to do if lost or anxious. Travel training is a gradual process, and finishes with unaccompanied journeys.
220. Training is flexible and person-centred, and throughout the training process the various elements will be monitored and reviewed, and can be changed to suit the individual's needs. The aim is to prepare individuals for safer and more confident engagement with the community by encouraging independent yet considerate interaction with others. Whilst safety is a key issue, focus is placed on tolerance and an enjoyment of the journey and what the community might have to offer.
221. Participating in Independent Travel Training is a positive lifestyle choice and allows the individual to develop the confidence and skills needed to travel alone, making it easier for them to meet up with friends, socialise, go to college, find a job and generally become more independent.
222. Where a young person with an identified SEND meets the criteria for ITT following an independent travel needs assessment process, a referral is made directly to Middlesbrough Council's Independent Travel Trainer. On receipt of a referral, the team evaluates the suitability of travel training for that particular student and, where appropriate, a personalised programme of training to meet their needs is devised, covering general road safety, personal safety, journey planning and coping strategies.

223. Further information can be accessed via the following link to the Council's website and an information sheet for parents.

[Independent Travel Training | Middlesbrough Council](#)

[Independent Travel Information \(middlesbrough.gov.uk\)](#)

[*Post-16 transport statement - 2022/2023 \(middlesbrough.gov.uk\)](#)

224. From January to November 2022, 22 young people with a disability or learning difficulty had been successfully trained on the ITT scheme, and a further 11 young people were in the process of being trained on the scheme (as at November 2022).
225. Schools and colleges also promote independent travel training as part of their study programmes. Additionally, independent travel is an essential requirement of a supported internship.

Lingfield Learning Centre, Coulby Newham (MCL)

226. As stated earlier in this report (**paragraph 104**), the Lingfield Learning Centre, is situated in Coulby Newham. Whilst some students are transported by parents and carers, the Lingfield Centre is an advocate of independent travel.
227. Independent travel guidance can be provided to students whereby a member of staff accompanies the young person on their journey to Lingfield from their home. This can include identifying the best methods of transport to use, for example, which bus to use. This has proved successful with students feeling a great sense of achievement.

CONCLUSIONS

228. Based on the information provided throughout the investigation, the Panel's conclusions are as follows:-
- A) The Panel recognises that preparing young people for adulthood and independence is a corporate parenting responsibility and that the Council and its partners must work together to ensure this task is shared equally.
 - B) The Panel heard a range of examples of how services across Council directorates work together and in partnership with external agencies to support young people to become independent.
 - C) Whilst Members acknowledge the improvements identified in the findings of the Ofsted Monitoring Visit to the Leaving Care Service (November 2022), they did express concern at the areas still requiring improvement.

Term of Reference A – To consider how the Council seeks to secure employment or training for young people with care experience and/or special needs

- D) The Panel is satisfied that the EET service (work readiness) is providing good support to young people to help them into Education, Employment or Training, with an above England and North East average of delivering the September Guarantee, although the percentage of 16 and 17 year olds in Middlesbrough who were NEET is slightly higher than the North East and England averages.
- E) Middlesbrough Community Learning is often regarded as Middlesbrough's 'Adult Education Provision', however, this is not strictly the case. The Teams within MCL are comprised of skilled, dedicated staff who are passionate about helping individuals to achieve their goals in relation to education and employment. The Teams offer advice, guidance and signposting in relation to a wide range of pathways available to young people, as well as adults, with support specific to the individual's needs.
- F) The '50 Futures Programme' has been successful in providing work placements for young people within Middlesbrough Council, and in external placements with trusted local employers. Most referrals to the 50 Futures Programme are received from the Apprenticeship and Alternative Provision Teams.
- G) The Managers of the Apprenticeship and Post-16 Alternative Provision Teams (MCL) attend the NEET Clinics and have forged good working relationships with Personal Advisors and Social Workers, particularly with the Pathways and Early Help services, for those young people who were not looked after but were still looking for the same opportunities. There are other areas within Children's Services and within other areas of the Council that are not aware of MCL and the ways in which they could potentially help more young people.
- H) The Panel notes the involvement of the Apprenticeship and Post-16 Alternative Provision Managers in developing an Action Plan with the Head of the Virtual School which will involve speaking to students who are unsure of what they want to do when they finish school. The aim is to provide support, information and guidance to those young people by MCL.

Term of Reference B - To look at ways in which young people with care experience are supported and encouraged to actively participate – with service development and part within their community

- I) The Panel welcomes the positive, ongoing work being undertaken by the Council's Participation Team with a range of young people but acknowledges the challenges faced regarding engagement.
- J) Members were impressed with the goals and aspirations expressed by young people with care experience who had taken part in completing questionnaires to assist with the Panel's investigation and are keen to ensure that those with care experience should have the same opportunities as their peers, without barriers.

Term of Reference C - To consider, where it is appropriate for a young person to move to supported accommodation or independent living, the options available and the support provided to young people and their families/carers (where appropriate) to prepare and plan for independent living

- K) The Pathways (Leaving Care) service is pivotal in supporting young people with care experience to become independent and, from the evidence provided, the Panel considers that there appears to be comprehensive support provided to care leavers in Middlesbrough.
- L) The Panel is aware of the financial position with regard to Children's Services and is supportive of the potential future housing provision initiative, to be delivered with external partners (/RSL) which will not only deliver significant cost savings to the Council but also provide a life cycle solution to young people with care experience.
- M) In this regard the Panel considers holistic support, in collaboration with the RSL, Health and relevant partners, to be essential in order for young people to succeed in their placements.
- N) In addition, it notes that a cohort of around 50 young people are approaching their 18th birthdays, with 20 between September and November 2023.

Term of Reference D - To examine how care experienced young people are supported with budgeting their finances and how they are supported to ensure their physical and emotional health needs are met

- O) There is a framework of financial support available to young people leaving care.
- P) The health of young people with care experience is overseen by HDFT. The Panel heard that since taking over the contract to deliver IHAs and RHAs of children in care, despite challenges the backlog of assessments has been cleared and the service has been instrumental in delivering immunisation programmes, dental pilot and the development of a health passport.
- Q) The health passport is a summary of medical and family medical history for all young people leaving care and is provided to them at that point. The Panel considers this to be an essential document for all care leavers.

Term of Reference E - To look at how young people with care experience and/or additional needs are supported to become more independent in travelling to school/college/other education settings/places of employment, or to help them become more independent with travelling socially

- R) Independent travel training provides young people, particularly those with SEND, with practical and tailored support to help them travel in a safe manner independently to their place of employment or education or to leisure venues. This provides young people with confidence to travel independently giving them a sense of achievement and helping to overcome isolation by enabling them to travel independently, whether this be to work, education venues or to socialise with family and friends.

RECOMMENDATIONS

229. Based on the evidence gathered during the investigation, and the conclusions, the Scrutiny Panel makes the following recommendations for consideration by the Executive:-

Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

- A) That clear pathways be established for young people, whatever their status (care leavers, SEN or having a disability), including flowcharts, to help young people and practitioners understand processes in place, options available and ensuring everyone is aware of available support/services.
- B) Whilst the SEND and Inclusion, Children with Disabilities, Early Help and Pathways (Leaving Care) services all work closely with Adult Social Care colleagues to ensure a smooth transition to adult social care, where determined appropriate, the Panel recommends that an Adult Social Worker be allocated to the young person between the age of 17 and 17.5 years to ensure a smooth handover and seamless transition for the young person and their family/carers and to establish appropriate pathways plans, clearly setting out how the young person will be supported to become an independent adult and identifying the team around the young person.
- C) To bridge the gap for a small number of young people with a disability or learning difficulty where their needs assessment outcome is a health need, that health colleagues begin to work with the young person from age 17, rather than 18, to ensure a smooth transition from Children's Social Care, again with clear pathway planning (as B. above).
- D) That work with Health colleagues be strengthened, particularly around joint commissioning and that appropriate health colleagues be invited to relevant groups and Strategic Board meetings associated with SEND to ensure joint working and service development.
- E) To establish a mechanism, including a Forum for parents/carers, to raise awareness between all groups associated with SEND so that everyone is aware of the work taking place within each of the groups so that opportunities for collaboration can be identified and duplication can be avoided.
- F) To ensure effective use of the Education Health and Care (EHC) process for young people with an identified SEND, up to the age of 25, to drive decision making and commissioning decisions in respect of the young person.

Care Leavers

- G) In line with Ofsted's findings from its monitoring visit to the Pathways (Leaving Care) Service in November 2022, in relation to areas requiring improvement, the Panel recommends that these areas be taken forward as part of the Improvement Plan and that progress be monitored and reported back to the Panel in six months' time.
- H) Ensure that all young people in care are introduced to the Pathways (Leaving Care) service at age 16 and that the process of being allocated a Personal Advisor to help support them in the transition of leaving care and preparation for independence be fully discussed with young people, taking into consideration their views and wishes.

- I) That adequate preparation and support in essential skills (such as cooking, shopping and money management) should be discussed as early as possible and regularly with young people to ensure they feel confident in performing such tasks independently once they do leave care and also that they are aware of who they can contact for help and support if needed.

Term of Reference A – To consider how the Council seeks to secure employment or training for young people with care experience and/or special needs

- J) That there is greater promotion of Middlesbrough Community Learning across all Council services, particularly Children's Services, to ensure all staff are aware of the support that MCL can offer to young people, particularly those with care experience, additional needs or those who are NEET. This should include:-
- i) Appropriate representatives (Head of Service/Managers from the MCL Teams) to attend a Children's Services LMT to promote their work and advise how they can potentially support vulnerable young people in a range of post-16 employment, education, training or apprenticeship pathways available to them. The information should be disseminated to Team Managers and staff across Children's Services to ensure that all Social Workers, Practitioners and Personal Advisors are aware of the pathways available through MCL and to appropriately signpost young people (and their families/carers) to the service.
 - ii) Better promotion of the 50 Futures Programme across all Council services, including information on support provided to placement providers and the benefits of providing a 50 Futures placement for a young person.
- K) That the Action Plan currently being developed with the Virtual School and MCL be provided to the Panel upon completion, for information, and that students currently monitored by the virtual school be provided with the advice needed, in sufficient time before leaving school, of the pathways available to them, including those available through MCL for those where college was not a viable option.

Term of Reference B - To look at ways in which young people with care experience are supported and encouraged to actively participate – with service development and part within their community

- L) The Panel supports the continuation of ongoing work by the Council's Participation Team with a range of care experienced young people through a range of groups and forums and encourages alternative, innovative ways of engaging those young people who may not necessarily want to meet in person but may still have valuable feedback to share in terms of shaping service development, for example, through the app/online.
- M) To strengthen the programme of participation and inclusion for young people with SEND, and their families/carers, in order for them to contribute to service development, policies and procedures – ensuring their needs are met.

Term of Reference C - To consider, where it is appropriate for a young person to move to supported accommodation or independent living, the options available and the support provided to young people and their families/carers (where appropriate) to prepare and plan for independent living

- N) The Panel is supportive of the future accommodation proposals being developed in partnership with housing providers, particularly in relation to care leavers, and requests an update in relation to progress in the next six months.
- O) That, in the development of the future accommodation proposals for care leavers, all relevant partners work together to ensure a package of holistic support is provided for each individual, tailored to meet their specific needs and that a detailed plan be produced, clearly setting out each element of the support to be provided to the individual. This plan should be provided to the young person and shared with professionals supporting them.
- P) That all accommodation is checked by the housing provider and relevant children's social care staff to ensure that it meets the required living standards and is located in an area considered to be suitable for the young person, also taking into consideration the young person's wishes.
- Q) Once finalised and approved, the proposals for independent tenancies with RSLs (housing providers) should be incorporated into the Sufficiency Action Plan (theme 4 – Improving Placements and Support for Care Leavers) which forms part of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- R) That a directory be compiled for young people moving to independent living accommodation containing essential information about the property, local area and amenities and support contact numbers for services/support across all relevant partners (social care, housing, health services, police).

Term of Reference D - To examine how care experienced young people are supported with budgeting their finances and how they are supported to ensure their physical and emotional health needs are met

- S) That, as part of ensuring care leavers are provided with support in essential life skills, particular focus be placed on managing finances and budgeting and as part of the accommodation offer for care leavers, detailed planning in relation to financial entitlements and benefits are clearly set out for each young person.
- T) All care leavers should be provided with information, as part of their Pathway Plan, as to where they can access help with their mental health and emotional well-being, including access to the dedicated CAMHS worker who is part of the Pathways service team, and other relevant services/support/peer groups to avoid social isolation.
- U) The Panel welcomes the introduction of Health Passports for young people leaving care as it provides essential medical history for young people in the future. The Panel feels this is an essential document and requests that the importance of the document is discussed and reinforced to young people on a regular basis.

- V) That relevant partners (health, Children's Social Care and Tees Valley Adoption) explore the possibility of providing a similar health passport for young people who become adopted.

Term of Reference E - To look at how young people with care experience and/or additional needs are supported to become more independent in travelling to school/college/other education settings/places of employment, or to help them become more independent with travelling socially

- W) The Panel is supportive of the independent travel training (ITT) provided to young people to help them have confidence to travel independently to education/employment settings or socially. It recommends that ITT be offered to all young people in Middlesbrough with SEND and/or care experience, where it is deemed they have capacity to travel independently and that this be monitored.

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Gail Earl	Head of Prevention
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Kerrie Scraton	Head of Children with Disabilities
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Carole Thorpe	Apprenticeships Co-ordinator, Middlesbrough Community Learning
Graeme Nicholson	Health Improvement Specialist, Public Health
Kelly Dudding	Tees Valley Children in Care Service, HDFT
Janette Savage	Head of Resident and Business Support

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: 26 July, 27 September, 25 October, 14 November, 20 December 2022, 17 January & 14 February 2023.

Websites: Middlesbrough Council – Independent Transport Training & Home to School Transport; Middlesbrough Children Matter – The Local Offer 2020; Middlesbrough Corporate Parenting Strategy 2020-2023; Gov.UK - "Ready or Not: Care Leavers' Views on Preparing to Leave Care January 2022; Ofsted – Monitoring Visit to Middlesbrough Pathways Leaving Care Service, November 2022.

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

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