

EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: CHILDREN'S SERVICES – COUNCILLOR ZAFAR UDDIN

DATE OF MEETING: 18 September 2023

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members on areas of activity within my portfolio including performance against strategic priorities.

1. First, I would like to provide the members with the information regarding the recruitment of Director of Children's Services (DCS).
2. Following a process led by the Chief Officers' Appointment Panel, Joe Tynan, currently employed as an Assistant Director for Children's Services at the London Borough of Bexley, has been offered and accepted the role as Director of Children's Services at Middlesbrough Council. At the time of writing a start date has yet to be confirmed; until Joe's arrival, Erik Scollay, the Director of Adult Social Services will continue to also fulfil the statutory role of Director of Children's Services.
3. Dawn Alaszewski has been engaged on a temporary basis as Director of Children's Care.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Strategic Priority: *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*

Update: Early Help & MACH (Multi Agency Children's Hub) – thresholds and responses.

4. Summer is a challenging period for the "front door" of children's services as although there is a holiday-driven reduction in referrals from schools, there is a corresponding increase in referrals from the Police and other partners. Summer last year, and in particular August 2022 were the most challenging month of the year, but referral rates have been lower during this year's holiday period. The rate of work however has still required the staff of MACH to be flexible and creative in providing support to children and their families.

Update: Our work with Children with Disabilities.

5. Safeguarding & Care Planning/Children with Disabilities Recruitment update:

Following a period during which we have relied heavily on agency workers within key team manager roles, we completed a successful recruitment process that now sees permanent appointees in all the team manager roles within this key, safety critical area of the

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directorate. We continue to progress the appointment of permanent Social Workers as some agency staff remain within this tier of the structure.

Update: Children Looked After – early permanence and permanence planning – one of the best performing in the region.

Children Looked After (CLA) and fostering:

6. Work continues on the priority to recruit new “in-house” foster carers; this month we are pleased to report that we have welcomed two new households to the team of fantastic “in-house” foster carers living in and around Middlesbrough. The fostering team will be recruiting at a range of events across Middlesbrough between now and Christmas including Middlesbrough Pop-Up Pride; at James Cook University Hospital, in the centre of town in the run up to Christmas and at a few sporting events.

Residential, Supported Accommodation, Resource and Care Leavers:

7. We held a successful event on the 25th of July 2023 to launch our new Care Leavers’ Offer. The event was attended by members of our Corporate Parenting Board, including myself and Mayor Chris Cooke. Care Leavers and other relevant professionals. The Care Leavers’ offer identifies what Care Leavers can expect in terms of support as they move towards adulthood. This includes support regarding accommodation, access to employment and education and support to health services. The support is provided by Local Authority as their Corporate Parent and other partner agencies such as health and housing. Care Leavers have been involved in the design of the Care Leaver Offer and it is planned that through the Care Leavers’ Forum they will report back to the Corporate Parenting Board about how it is working in practice. The Care Leavers’ Offer will be published on the Council’s website at beginning of September 2023. As part of the Care Leavers’ Offer, a Care Leaver Hub is being developed and it is anticipated that the Hub will act as a central and young people friendly space for Care Leavers to access services.

HIGHLIGHTS

Early Help:

8. KFC Foundation partners with Middlesbrough organisations on food programmes.
9. Middlesbrough Council Early Help Service have worked in partnership with KFC Foundation over the summer, to facilitate a roundtable workshop with a range of Council services whose work relates to youth provision and communities as well as with local youth organisations, with a view to understand how the KFC Youth Foundation can continue to collaborate, support, and provide youth work in Middlesbrough through the creation of a Youth Hub.
10. The KFC Youth Foundation has now launched Big Boro Big Eats: two programmes that will provide food education for young people and food aid for local communities, in partnership with local Middlesbrough organisations Linx Youth Project and Youth Focus Northeast.
11. The programmes complement existing work already being done by the organisations to address the barriers and disadvantages faced by young people in Middlesbrough. In

collaboration with the KFC Youth Foundation, charity partner Linx has been running sessions across its five sites.

12. Between 12:00 and 17:30 Monday to Friday throughout the summer Youth Focus North East are facilitating pop-up sessions for the community in key areas.
13. Big Boro Big Eats will lay the foundations for the opening of a permanent KFC Youth Foundation Centre in Middlesbrough in 2024, with the Foundation set to open Youth Hubs across the country.

THE TIME AHEAD

14. I have continued to visit various teams and meet up with front line staff members, team managers and senior managers. Recently visited our fostering team and met with several members of the team chatting on relevant issues. I am surprisingly pleased to say that, throughout my journey, I have met several staff members who I have worked with in the past on various setting including local authorities and voluntary sectors.
15. I am also liaising with our Adoption team at the Adoption Tees Valley (ATV) hoping to support the team in terms of recruiting Panel members from the BAME back -grounds. I am told that we are lacking in recruiting members of the BAME panel members with appropriate knowledge and skills to reflect the diversity issues within the equal opportunity policies.
16. We are still looking to increase our internal residential provision by purchasing properties in the local area, which means we can look at bringing children closer to home and their families and friends. Currently exploring several properties within the Borough as part of property project. However, the purchase/renovation of properties have not progressed as quickly as had been anticipated in the budget setting/savings plan.
17. Following a meeting and consulting with Ward Councillors, we are still progressing West Lodge (1 Bedded) and Pallister Park (2 Bedded). I would like to thank Rob Hamer, our Interim Head of Service (HOS) Residential support Accommodation, Resource Care Leavers, for his continued dedication and hard work.
 - West Lodge completion January 2025 should this happen operational end of March 2025.
 - Pallister Park completion January 2025 should this happen operational end of March 2025.

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