

<b>MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL</b>	
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<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Children's Care – Dawn Alaszewski
<b>Relevant Executive Member:</b>	Executive Member for Children's Services
<b>Submitted to:</b>	You Matter to Us - Corporate Parenting Board
<b>Date:</b>	10 July 2025
<b>Title:</b>	Children in Care Update
<b>Report for:</b>	Discussion
<b>Status:</b>	Public
<b>Council Plan priority:</b>	Safe and resilient communities
<b>Key decision:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Why:</b>	Report is for information only
<b>Subject to call in?:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Why:</b>	Not applicable

<b>Proposed decision(s)</b>
No decision information only.

<b>Executive summary</b>
<p>The report is an outline of current numbers of children in our care and their circumstances in relation to permanence and Education, Training and Employment.</p> <p>The report is intended for information and further discussion by the committee.</p>

## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To inform the committee of the current numbers and brief circumstances of children in our care.
- 1.2 To inform the committee of actions being taken to improve the experience and outcomes for children in our care.

## **2. Recommendations**

### **2.1 That the Corporate Parenting Board**

- Acknowledges the information presented
- Makes any recommendations and actions required

## **3. Rationale for the recommended decision(s)**

### **3.1 Not applicable**

## **4. Background and relevant information**

### **4.1 Update on children in care data/timescales/ numbers of care proceedings currently/PLO**

We currently have 498 children who are cared for, 322 have plans of permanence and are supported by the Children Looked After Teams. 15 have plans of permanence and are supported by social workers in the Children with Disability Service. The remaining children and young people are subject to permanence planning within the Safeguarding and Care Planning Service and Assessment Service.

Of those subject to permanence planning a majority are subject to legal processes in order to determine plans of permanence. We have 2 children who are in our care who are currently subject to Deprivation of Liberty Orders under the jurisdiction of the Court of Protection, within Safeguarding and Care Planning.

### **4.2 Update overview around children in our care who are NEET and what we are doing to support young people back into education, employment and training**

The Personal Advisors work with their young people encouraging them and guiding them on how to access education and supporting them to access key agencies who can assist them. The key services we use are as follows; the NEET Clinic, the Work Readiness Team, and the Middlesbrough Employability Hub drop in which takes place twice a week. Discussions between education and social care continue as needed for individual children and young people with complex needs to develop plans and opportunities for them to engage in employment, education and training.

The Early Help team provide support to young people around education, employment and training, which is available up to 21 years. Discussions have been held with the service to seek to extend this to 25 years in line with the extended duties. The service is seen to have a positive impact for young people, and it is hoped that with the expansion of this work, that this will extend to all young people who are cared for and care experienced.

Links have been made with the Care Leavers Covenant in June 2025, which will assist in supporting the development of apprenticeships within the Council and wider Middlesbrough organisations.

#### **4.3 DfE work/reunification**

The funding for this aspect of the work by the DfE ended in March 2025. However, continues within the teams as part of our role and responsibility, this is monitored through Permanency Monitoring Group (PMG). Although a change in working practices and culture was needed, across a number of services, this has been a positive intervention with either changed orders or care orders discharged in some cases and clarity on the need for long-term foster care for some children and young people. Courts have been positive about this work and have provided compliments around this.

#### **4.4 Fostering**

Linked to the reunification work has been the development of our Fostering Service, with the addition of a Kinship Team, via the Modernising Fostering transformation work. This team will provide support to SGO and CAO carers post order, when the children are no longer open to Children Services. This team will provide reviews of support plans, access to training and support groups for kinship carers. Managers and legal colleagues recently met with the senior Judge to advise of the work in this area, which was received very positively, with the senior Judge agreeing to notify all Judges within the Court of the work by Middlesbrough.

Although we remain linked to Foster with North East (FwNE), changes have been made to our marketing strategy over the past few months, to encourage more local foster carers. Middlesbrough Council has been recognised as a Fostering Friendly Employer, by the Fostering Network, which is a national organisation. The Fostering Team have held the first of the fostering events with staff at Fountain Court, to advise employees of the fostering role and the process to approval as a foster carer. This work will be ongoing, within our own organisation to encourage people to be assessed as foster carers.

Part of the updated marketing campaign has seen recent media activity to homes in Middlesbrough and via the website, which has been very positive. A Facebook post reached 117,000 people, had 717 shares, 330 comments, 334 reactions e.g. liked, 26 enquiries to Middlesbrough, 29 enquiries to other LAs in the region. Information sent to 44,084 residents via My Middlesbrough, 19,040 opened this (44.4%), 287 people clicked the link and 10 enquiries were made to FwNE. This has been very positive for the authority, and we hope to see conversions to foster carers from this initial campaign, with other campaigns to follow.

**4.5 Care experienced young people updates;** 249 care experienced young people are open to the Pathways service. 211 are aged between 18 and 21, and 38 are aged over 21 and up to age 25. There are currently no young people in the eligibility category of eligible

or relevant, 241 under the category of Former Relevant child, 8 under the category of Qualifying Care Leaver. There are 3 young people with the category of relevant child and 110 with the category of eligible.

The 2 Pathways Teams are proving successful, with increased oversight and support provided to the staff. Personal Advisors have on average 19 young people each to support, plus on average 3 young people identified as having complex needs, who are not 18 yet. The Personal Advisors co- work these young people with the allocated children's Social Worker.

Work has continued to embed the transition pathway; this includes children and young people from the age of 15 ¾ being heard at the Transitions Panel to ensure that Adult Services are aware of any that may need a service post 18 and at housing panel to ensure we have a firm plan around accommodation.

All 18–25 year olds have an allocated PA. There are 34 17-year-olds, who are not allocated a PA. There is one vacant PA post in the team, which is currently going through the process to request recruitment. Demand currently exceeds available PA resource despite the previous agreement for additional posts in 2024. This is as a result of more young people becoming cared for who, by virtue of the age and number of weeks cared for prior to and after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, are then eligible for a leaving care service. Changes have been made to role types in the system, so that recording is more accurate.

The Care Leavers Hub has not been progressed as planned. We are working with colleagues to seek a suitable location, complete any work needed and open this resource as soon as possible.

**5. Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended**

Not applicable report is for information only

**6. Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)**

Not applicable report is for information only

**Background papers**

Not applicable report is for information only

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