

EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE TO COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Philippa Storey - Deputy Mayor and Executive Member for Education and Culture

DATE OF MEETING: 26 November 2025

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

COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES

- *Successful & Ambitious Town*
- *A Healthy Place*

Update:

- Family Hubs
- Education Alliance Board
- Suspension and Exclusions
- Grants
- Museums
- Town Hall
- Theatre
- Events

1. HIGHLIGHTS

Update:

Education and Partnerships

1.1 Family Hubs Autumn 2025

1.1.1 Exciting times presently as we transition towards the Best Start Family Hub in April 2026 bringing together a clear direction of travel aimed at supporting all of Middlesbrough's children and families from conception up to aged 25. Governed by both the Education Alliance and Children's Trust Board, a School Readiness workstream has implemented actions which aim to secure the best start for our children. The key focus going forward is based on achieving greater proportions of children who are school ready; going onto to achieve improved Good Level of Development (GLD) by the end of Reception (EYFS). The transition to the new model has allowed the team to reflect on current practice and work with partners, including Parent Champions to understand need and establish new ways of working.

1.1.2 Underpinning the vision: Every child in Middlesbrough will Start Well – nurtured, confident, and supported from birth – and Achieve Well by developing the foundations needed for lifelong learning, work will be achieved through shared commitment and

partnership working across families, Thrive at 5, early years settings, schools, health services, voluntary agencies, and the local authority.

1.1.3 Work is progressing to develop key actions to:

- Strengthen parenting and family resilience.
- Improve home learning and communication environments pre school.
- Enhance children's language, self-care, and emotional wellbeing.
- Embed seamless multi-agency collaboration and accountability.

1.1.4 These actions will:

- Seek the voice of communities and families to ensure the right support is delivered.
- Services have eyes on the child and family encouraging them to them to be the best version they can by offering a constant range of support which builds trusted relationships.
- Strengthen parental confidence as the right support is provided at the right time.
- Promote learning at home.
- Allow for early speech and language identification of need and secure language rich talking environments.
- Build emotional resilience and self-care.

1.1.5 We have great participation from a range of partners within the sector who are all appreciating the value of shared ownership where each jigsaw piece forms the larger jigsaw; avoids duplication and allowing the next stage of a child's journey to be successful. Meetings, held every 6 weeks, monitor progress and provides opportunity for stakeholders to challenge actions and reflect – this has secured a shared ambition and the co-production of action planning.

1.2 Inclusion

1.2.1 We continue to drive forward developments to support our children and young people with SEND and those who might require alternative provision. As we await the School's White Paper which will outline the next steps for the SEND Reforms, we know that a greater focus will be on inclusion within mainstream settings for all our children and young people. We will provide further information once these are published. We continue work with schools to reduce the number of exclusions and suspensions. The rate of exclusions remains similar to that of last year and has not increased. For children who are suspended they are facing less days lost due to the suspension which means the child is back into school sooner and in the learning environment.

1.3 Community Learning

1.3.1 Middlesbrough Community Learning is going to be moving premises into the new employment and skills hub within the Cleveland Centre and this move is expected to take place in early 2026. The support delivered will be for ESOL, Maths and English, employment support and bespoke employer led provision (BELP) mainly within the new premises but also within communities.

1.3.2 Current work is ongoing with a range of partners to establish local need and the best approach to widen access to our classes and courses. We are also aiming to work with more partner organisations to use and provide services from within the employment and skills hub to provide more holistic support for individuals.

1.3.3 The new venue will be very close to the Live Well Centre and therefore create closer working relationship with health. A review of branding to provide clarity to the people that we aim to engage with and will be known as Middlesbrough Community Learning but will have locality venues such as The Employment and Skills Hub, Lingfield College and Martonside Alternative Provision will sit under the MCL umbrella. A review and update of social media content and website content to reflect an up to date and accessible offer of MCL services. To make access easier, an online booking system will be incorporated to the website, making getting in touch an easier process for communities.

1.3.4 Further and deeper collaboration with Middlesbrough College is taking place so that we can work together to provide classes and courses that are needed in the community. We are also looking to ensure that we have a course prospectus each year in digital and paper format and are reviewing timetables and content of classes and courses but will aim to do so with community consultation for things like learning for inclusion and implement some of these changes in the next academic year.

1.3.5 **Trailblazer** – has now commenced with approximately 36 young people now in paid placements or work trials, Middlesbrough Community Learning has placed a young person to be a marketing support role and they are currently reviewing our marketing and social media content and working closely with MBC staff too.

1.3.6 **Outreach events** – the service will be attending the Tees Skills Careers Fair in December and also the family hub event at North Ormesby Community Hub on 9th December, with more outreach events in the future.

1.3.7 **Work well** - a new employment focussed contract to support people with a fit note (in last 6 months) to help them to access support to help them to return to the workplace or to help them to look for alternative employment - this is a one year funded project and will commence in next few weeks.

1.3.8 **Connect to Work** – marketplace event took place on 12th November in Middlesbrough for potential subcontractors to attend, this will be a five year contract and Local Authorities have to subcontract 40% of the contract value out.

1.3.9 **Alternative Provision** – We are now delivering AP at Martonside and currently have 26 places with plans to extend this offer to 32 in the coming months, there are also discussions to grow the service and looking at Whinney Banks as another area of delivery.

1.3.10 **Employment Hub Coordinator** – Role is now live! Interviews to take place at the end of November.

Culture

1.4 Middlesbrough Town Hall

1.4.1 Shows highlights from October included: Jodie Nicholson in the Courtroom, Sherlock Holmes Theatre Go Round with Middlesbrough Theatre, Jason Manford, Twisterella, Iain Stirling, Lightning Seeds, Taste of Africa Showcase, Simon Yates, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Jimeoin, Elvana, Family Theatre Pirates of Buccaneer Bay and Bernie Slaven – This Is Your Life; a celebration of Bernie's career.



Tomorrow Street by Stellar Creates

1.4.2 During October Half Term, the Firestation was transformed into *Tomorrow Street*; an imaginary avenue full of playful shops and inspiring spaces for families to enjoy. Produced by Stellar Creates and created by artist Anna Bruder in collaboration with local communities, *Tomorrow Street* offered visitors the opportunity to be creative including a trip to the florist to colour in a flower to take home for a loved one, design a favourite meal in the café and visit the garage and build a cardboard car. The experience was incredibly popular with over 1,100 visitors being welcomed into the space across the week.

1.4.3 Other community events which took place in October included: MBC's Older People's Day in the Crypt, Fenwicks Christmas Rehearsals, School & College Tours, October Half Term HAF & Stagestruck Workshops, and TeesDance rehearsals. Regular community sessions also continued including MTH Community Choir, Andy's Man Club, Senior Citizens Forum, and Unison Retired Members.

1.5 Musinc

Funding:

- We're delighted to report that our application to Youth Music Catalyser for another two years of funding for our music inclusion programme has been successful. Youth Music have approved a grant of £50K a year for 2026/27 and 2027/28. The programme will be supplemented by additional £75K from the Mayoral Priorities Fund and the Town Hall NPO.
- Musinc has also been successful in securing £99,547 from the Better Youth Spaces fund, which will resource a professional studio and recording space for young people in Middlesbrough.

Activity:

- Careers Panel for Secondary School students
- Schools Big Gig: Rockin' Christmas is on track to sell out again (as of 27/10 we have 700 attendees)
- Our regular activity continues to be in high demand, with waiting lists in place for a number of groups
- Young people from our groups will perform at the Christmas Light Switch On event, inside Middlesbrough Town Hall, and at Amplify; our termly open mic night on Tuesday 9th December.

Partnerships:

- We are working closely with Sonic Futures (Generator) and Tees Music Alliance to provide stronger pathways into the music industry – ensuring young people attending our programmes have the skills and confidence to forge careers in the music industry in Teesside.

1.6 Middlesbrough Theatre

Bookings in November are strong, with one of our regular tribute bands having already reached target and the other not far behind. The team regularly receives very positive feedback from visiting companies and this month have had fulsome praise from a local dance school who were first-time users of the theatre (and hopefully not the last!).

1.7 Middlesbrough Museums

1.7.1 October proved to be a particularly busy and rewarding month at the museums. Captain Cook Birthplace Museum opened its doors on Friday 3rd October unveiling a new pirate themed playscape designed to engage and inspire younger visitors to the museum, and the Dorman Museum commenced with 'Spooked' an evening of murder, mystery and magic. This was our first attempt of hosting such an event and was met with encouraging success, selling out one week prior to event.



Spooked @ The Dorman



Curious: A Night at the Museum

1.7.2 Following this we hosted Curious: A Night at the Museum. A celebration of Teesside's LGBTQIA+ community. The event highlighted the regions rich diversity and commitment to inclusion, and featured a silent disco, Curious Bingo, and a special exhibition with on-set photography and props from the BBC Three show Smoggie Queens. During the half term week, the Dorman welcomed families with a wide range of events and activities designed to **educate** Reptile Encounter, Big Science, Rockpool School, Spooky Book Club, **entertain** Monster Magic Show, Pop up Cardboard Museum, Togetherfest, Big Science show, **engage** Monster Circus, Museum Trail, Craft sessions.

1.8 Events

The Events Team supported the delivery of Diwali on 25 October. Diwali is one of the major festivals mainly celebrated by Hindus, Sikhs and Jains all over the world. This free, fun event for all the family took place on Centre Square and featured live music and dance along with mouth-watering street food, children's activities, a funfair and a Bollywood-themed fireworks finale.



Diwali on Centre Square

The events team are also gearing up for the Christmas Parade and Lights switch on.