

YOU MATTER TO US - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the You Matter to Us - Corporate Parenting Board was held on Thursday 16 October 2025.

PRESENT: Councillors L Henman (Chair), E Lynch, D Jackson, J McTigue, S Platt and Z Uddin (Vice-Chair)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: S Calvert (Volunteer Voice/Change Ambassador)

OFFICERS: D Alaszewski, T Dunn, G Nicholson, G Peacock, S Disbury, E Scollay, C McGarry, S Lightwing, T Frankland, A Bates and T Jelfs

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors P Storey & L Young

24/1 WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and read out the Building Evacuation Procedure.

24/2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

24/3 MINUTES - YOU MATTER TO US - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD - 13 MARCH 2025

The minutes of the You Matter to Us – Corporate Parenting Board meeting held on 13 March 2025 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

24/4 MINUTES - YOU MATTER TO US - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD - 3 APRIL 2025

The minutes of the You Matter to Us – Corporate Parenting Board meeting held on 3 April 2025 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

24/5 MINUTES - YOU MATTER TO US - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD - 10 JULY 2025

The minutes of the You Matter to Us – Corporate Parenting Board meeting held on 10 July 2025 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

24/6 CARE FOR AND CARE EXPERIENCE ENGAGEMENT APRIL-JUNE 2025

Members were provided with a Care For and Care Experience Engagement update and a report was presented to cover activity from April-June 2025 and beyond due to the last meeting being deferred. Members were advised that a new care experienced adult had been recruited as a Volunteer Voice/Change Ambassador (previously known as a Care Ambassador) and was present at the Board meeting today.

The Chair thanked the new Volunteer Voice for his time at the meeting and for supporting the engagement activities and wider engagement work.

Further details were included in the report and the following matters were discussed during the meeting:

- An informal engagement event had been held on 25th September for Corporate Parents with cared for and older care experienced young people/adults to discuss their direct input into plans and development of services for them.
- The Voice and Change Ambassadors were working with the Pathways team to support eight care experienced adults to create a music video and start a choir.
- There had been a football event held for cared for and care experienced young people/adults at MFC Herlingshaw Centre in July.
- A Halloween event had been scheduled to take place at My Place on 29th October

and Members were welcome to join.

- The We Matter Christmas party was scheduled to take place on 10th December at Teesside University Student Union where there would be games and activities.
- November was National Care Leavers/Experienced Month and a schedule of events/activities throughout the month would be circulated. On 27th November another informal engagement activity was planned for Corporate Parents to attend to discuss 'Safe and Stable Homes' and 'Opportunities to Succeed' with cared for and care experienced young people.

AGREED that the information provided was received and noted.

24/8

YOU MATTER TO US - PERFORMANCE

The Director of Children's Care presented the latest You Matter to Us Performance Data. The information provided had been compiled using the Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) based on Ofsted's inspecting local authority services for children (ILACS) Annex A dataset (2020)/inspection report. The following areas were highlighted:

- The number of children in care had remained similar over the past few years.
- There had been 120 CLA starters in the last six months.
- There had been an increase in adoptions and Special Guardianship Orders being granted.
- The rate of CLA per 10,000 children was becoming in line with statistical neighbours.
- 90% of current open CLA who had been looked after for at least 12 months had an up to date health assessment and 82% for dental checks. It was noted that this had got better but still needed improvement.
- 12% of all CLA had a missing incident.
- 83% of care leavers aged 17-18 were in touch with the LA and 94% for 19-21 year olds.

The Chief Executive noted that the largest 'reason episode of care ceased' shown in the data was 'any other reason' and asked for clarification on what this could cover.

The Director of Children's Services advised that this could be separated further at the next meeting.

AGREED that:

- The information provided was received and noted.
- More detail be provided around the 'any other reason' field within the 'Reason episode ceased' ChAT data. If 'aged out' of care, this to be specified.

24/8

CHILDREN IN CARE UPDATE

The Head of Corporate Parenting and Fostering delivered an update on Children in Care to the Board. At the time of the report, there were 498 children who were cared for, 322 had plans of permanence and were supported by the Children Looked After Teams. 15 had plans of permanence and were supported by social workers in the Children with Disability Service. The remaining children and young people were subject to permanence planning within the Safeguarding and Care Planning Service and Assessment Service. Of those subject to permanence planning a majority were subject to legal processes in order to determine plans of permanence. Middlesbrough had 2 children who were in our care who were currently subject to Deprivation of Liberty Orders under the jurisdiction of the Court of Protection, within Safeguarding and Care Planning.

For children in care who were no longer in the education system, working or being trained for work, a personal advisor would work in conjunction with the Social Worker and had a responsibility to care leavers after their care order had ceased. They supported their young people to develop life skills for independent living and access key agencies who could assist them. The key services used were as follows; the NEET Clinic, the Work Readiness Team, and the Middlesbrough Employability Hub drop in which took place twice a week. It was also raised that incidents of young people presenting as homeless on their 18th birthday had increased so advice around housing and how to contact social housing providers as well as managing budgets was an important aspect of the personal advisors' work.

A Member queried how many personal advisers were currently in post and it was confirmed that there were 15.

The Early Help team provided support to young people around education, employment and training, which was available up to 21 years. Discussions had been held with the service to seek to extend this to 25 years in line with the extended duties. The service was seen to have a positive impact for young people, and it was hoped that with the expansion of this work, this would extend to all young people who were cared for and care experienced. There had been feedback that care experienced children were accessing better opportunities and achieving more due to the work of the Early Help team.

The funding by the DfE around reunification ended in March 2025. However, this work continued within the teams as part of the Council's role and responsibility, this was monitored through Permanency Monitoring Group (PMG). Although a change in working practices and culture was needed, across a number of services, this had been a positive intervention with either changed orders or care orders discharged in some cases and provided clarity on the need for long term foster care for some children and young people. Courts and DfE had been positive about this work and had provided compliments around this. Feedback from families who had been through the reunification process had also been received and they reported very positive experiences working with children's care.

The Fostering Service had also been developed alongside the reunification work and a Kinship Team had been introduced, via the Modernising Fostering Transformation work. This team would provide support to SGO and CAO carers post order, when the children were no longer open to Children Services. This team would provide reviews of support plans, access to training and support groups for kinship carers. Managers and legal colleagues had 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.

Marketing campaigns had also been run across the North East to encourage local foster carers and had received good engagement. The shortage of foster carers was due to a variety of reasons including the high level of responsibility, in-depth assessments and training, the requirement to have a spare bedroom and an aging population where biological children were living at home for longer. There was an increasing rate of children having to be placed outside their home authority due to availability and keeping local links was key to a child's progression.

The Volunteer Voice and Change Ambassador suggested the creation of videos featuring children in care as part of a marketing campaign to show their stories, highlight the voices of care experienced children and encourage fostering in the town.

AGREED that:

1. Officers would look into the creation of videos featuring children in care as part of a marketing campaign to show their stories, highlight the voices of care experienced children and encourage fostering in the town.
2. That the information provided was received and noted.

24/9

CARE LEAVERS OFFER

The Head of Corporate Parenting and Fostering provided an update on the Care Leavers Offer and advised that Middlesbrough's hub had been developed with the collaboration of young people in the Borough and was located in the Live Well Centre. The hub was aimed at young people aged 16 to 25 who were due to leave or had left care and provided a base for support with facilities such as a gym and living area. The Live Well Centre was a Council-ran building and a permanent venue.

Members queried the funding timescale for the hub and it was confirmed that it would likely become part and parcel of the financial strategy moving forward.

A Member also queried how young people were made aware of the hub and any activities that took place. It was confirmed that the Personal Advisors would keep young people up to date with scheduled activities in addition to social media and word of mouth. Constant engagement also took place with young people to ensure the hub and its provision was aligned with their needs. This was echoed by the Voice and Change Ambassador. Members requested that

information/activities regarding the Care Leavers Hub be circulated to Councillors and that Officers suggested ways that Members could support during 'National Care Leavers/Experienced Month' to raise awareness/celebrate successes.

AGREED that:

1. Information/activities regarding the Care Leavers Hub to be circulated to Councillors.
2. Officers to put forward ways that Members could support during 'National Care Leavers/Experienced Month' and this to be circulated to Councillors.
3. That the information provided was received and noted.

24/10

PRIVATE FOSTERING ANNUAL REPORT

The Director of Children's Care provided an update on Private Fostering. Private fostering was an arrangement for a child under 16 to be cared for by an adult not related to them, for more than 28 days. For example, by a family friend in their home. There were National Minimum Standards in place that applied to all local authorities. These standards were grouped under a series of key topics:

- Statement on private fostering
- Notification
- Safeguarding and promote welfare
- Advice and support
- Monitoring compliance

It was advised that this type of arrangement was not particularly common in Middlesbrough but that in this situation, the Council was reliant on someone with parental responsibility and the private foster carer notifying the Council of the arrangement. It was a legal duty to inform the local authority and this was advertised in settings such as schools, GP surgeries and A&E to increase awareness.

A Member queried whether private or mainstream fostering had an impact on an individual's social housing banding. It was confirmed that this would be taken away as an action and confirmed outside of the meeting.

It was also raised that more awareness of private fostering regulations and the duty to report was needed for housing officers.

The action plan going forward focused on the following areas:

- Ensure that there was targeted awareness raising and training in private fostering and that this was regularly re-communicated to the workforce and the community. This was an action carried forward by agreement at STSCP. A joint campaign will take place between Middlesbrough and R&CBC.
- Hold the annual review of private fostering arrangements.
- Align Private Fostering Offer into overall Kinship Care service, to allow more tailored support for carers.

AGREED that:

1. Information to be confirmed with the Board around social housing banding for foster carers/private foster carers and what (if any) impact this has on priority.
2. That the information provided was received and noted.

24/11

VIRTUAL SCHOOL - ANNUAL REPORTS 2022/2023 AND 2023/2024

With the approval of the Chair, this report was **DEFERRED** to the next meeting.

24/12

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)

With the approval of the Chair, this report was **DEFERRED** to the next meeting.

24/13

ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.

The Chair advised that discussions were ongoing as to ways in which the You Matter to Us –

Corporate Parenting Board could be enhanced and invited suggestions from the Board.

Members agreed that a more thematic approach would be useful and would provide opportunity for a more thorough understanding of specific topics meaning that the meetings could be used to drive change where needed. Themes suggested included education, housing and Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC). It was also raised that the themes and agendas of the meetings should be influenced by our care experienced young people and that the Board alternate meetings, with one focused on data and the next on lived experience.

The timing of the meeting was also discussed and it was agreed that some thought should be given to scheduling the meeting for earlier in the week and at an earlier timeslot, although it was raised that our care experienced young people and some Members could have work/education commitments during the working day.

AGREED that:

1. The discussion was noted.
2. Officers and the Chair would review the suggestions from Members on how to enhance future meetings and determine how to implement them in future.