

YOU MATTER TO US - CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the You Matter to Us - Corporate Parenting Board was held on Thursday 22 January 2026.

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: S Calvert (Volunteer Voice/Change Ambassador), A Robinson Coates (Volunteer Voice/Change Ambassador)

OFFICERS: T Dunn, G Nicholson, Peacock, C Cannon, T Frankland, T Jelfs and A Bates

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors D McCabe, 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 - 16 OCTOBER 2025**

The minutes of the You Matter to Us – Corporate Parenting Board meeting held on 16 October 2025 were submitted and approved as an accurate record.

24/4 **CARED FOR AND CARE EXPERIENCED ENGAGEMENT JULY - DECEMBER 2025**

Members were provided with a Cared For and Care Experience Engagement update and a report was presented to cover activity from July-December 2025. The Voice and Influence Manager highlighted during Care Experienced Month in November, the police had run a drop-in session at the Live Well Centre for our cared for and care experienced young people where they had the opportunity to ask the police questions and hear more about what they do. One of our Change Ambassadors had also delivered a talk to police trainee recruits, reflecting on his experiences with policing both positive and negative. This led to constructive discussion about the ways in which adverse life experiences and trauma can affect behaviour and lead to involvement with the criminal justice system.

A Member queried how the talk was received by the police.

It was confirmed that the feedback from the new recruits was very complimentary and they were keen to ask questions and learn from the Volunteer's experiences.

Following a discussion with one of our Change Ambassadors after the last Corporate Parenting Board meeting, Members also heard that Geoff Field (Corporate Director of Environment, Communities and Culture) had invited cared for and care experienced young people to hear about what his service was responsible for within Middlesbrough Council and career opportunities that were available. One young adult applied for one of the Refuge Collector posts and successfully got the job. A proposal on how to get more care experienced young people to work in Geoff's service area will be presented to DMT in 2026.

The Corporate Director of Children's Services added that this initiative would also be fed back to leadership across other areas of the Council and partners to maximise opportunities for our young people. It was also noted that support should be put in place for young people who were in a transitional stage and not yet ready for employment, to gain experience and become prepared to enter the workforce. This could be done through interview training, employability skills etc.

One of our Change Ambassadors continued the engagement update and advised Members

that Pathways had invited their young adults to enjoy free access to Scream Factory in October after a successful trip in 2024. 14 young adults were supported by four Pathways staff and it was enjoyed by all who attended.

It was also noted that Councillor Luke Henman had arranged for some of our care experienced young adults to meet the MP Andy McDonald. They were joined by Councillor Henman and the Mayor Chris Cooke on the day. Councillor Henman advised that it was a very useful session and our young people heard about how they had got into politics and the different roles and responsibilities within local and central government. Our young people also had opportunity to share their experiences and Councillor Henman highlighted that the MP was very motivated by the discussions and was going to discuss further with decision-makers.

Lastly, the Voice and Influence Manager advised that a group of young people aged 18 – 25 had worked with Middlesbrough Council's Pathways team and herself to record their version of 'Dreams' by The Cranberries. The video was shown at a Full Council meeting and one of our Change Ambassadors also asked the Mayor a question.

AGREED that the information provided was received and noted.

24/5

DEVELOPING OUR FORWARD PLAN VIA A THEMATIC APPROACH

The Corporate Director of Children's Services delivered a presentation on developing a thematic approach for future meetings of the You Matter to Us – Corporate Parenting Board. She began by highlighting that all Councillors were corporate parents and the role of the Corporate Parenting Board was to consider how the Council was collectively fulfilling the role. The Director encouraged Members to consider what they would want for their own children and how well equipped they currently feel to fulfil the role of a corporate parent.

The Director continued that in previous meetings, there had been a significant amount of data presented covering many areas. Members were asked whether there were particular themes for which additional detailed data would be useful, allowing them to explore topics in greater depth. The importance of a joined-up approach was also highlighted, noting that disseminating information more broadly to our cared for and care experienced children, Councillors, staff and beyond was equally important as ensuring it was brought to the Board.

Members noted that it was important to hear the views of young people and what they require from their corporate parents. Training sessions for Councillors who do not understand their responsibilities as a corporate parent open to all Councillors would be useful and it was also suggested that data for future meetings was provided in a more concise and accessible format than previously, with Officers having the opportunity to highlight pertinent parts. It was also suggested that data could be circulated ahead of the meeting and important parts discussed in further detail at the meeting if necessary to optimise time available during the Board meetings.

One of our Change Ambassadors raised that Housing, Employment and Mental Health provision were very important topics for care experienced young people in Middlesbrough.

A Member queried the level of support provided to schools to ensure they are adequately equipped to prepare cared for and care experienced school leavers for the workforce.

It was confirmed that every school had a designated teacher who was accountable for children in care, usually a member of the Senior Management Team, and the Council offered training for this designated member of staff. The Council also worked in partnership with schools to provide opportunities for young people to visit universities and receive mentoring. The Virtual School worked closely with Middlesbrough College to ensure a smooth transition for school leavers and offer support to young people with their education, future pathways and work experience through online mentors.

The Change Ambassador added that college and home life often bled into one another for care experienced children as there was a shortage of 'third places'. It was important that cared for and care experienced children had a third space where they could feel safe and develop a sense of community and social support which could contribute to mental wellbeing.

It was also raised by the Change Ambassador that cared for and care experienced children

should not be forced into counselling and similar provision as this can backfire and cause individuals to withdraw, instead they should be given the option to engage when and if they are ready, although there should generally be more mental health and emotional wellbeing support available for care leavers. The barriers young people faced when making the transition to adulthood without a family support system were highlighted.

In response to this, Members heard that North East & Cumbria ICB were in the process of implementing the Pathway into 'Primary Care for Care Experienced People' which had successfully been in place in Northumberland since 2023. At the age of 17, each cared for child would have a final Review Health Assessment and they would also be given their health passport at this point. A summary of the young person's health history from birth to date, the Review Health Assessment and plan would be sent to their GP surgery. The Children in Care team would then task the GP surgery when the summary of care and Review Health Assessment was sent to raise awareness of the Child in Care who would become a Care Leaver the following year. This task would include a summary of their main health needs and anything outstanding. This system was aimed at empowering and enabling care experienced young people to access primary care and build relationships with more ease.

A suggestion was also made for increased involvement from local companies in supporting care-experienced children to develop work readiness, for example through work experience opportunities. This could be investigated in more detail at a future meeting focussed on employment and the importance of collective responsibility as a society was highlighted.

Concerns were raised that care leavers were disproportionately at risk of engaging in minor offending, underscoring the importance of early intervention and support to encourage positive choices during the early years of adulthood. The concerns raised prompted agreement that youth services should be considered as a future agenda item. Board Members also noted the opportunity to proactively liaise and feedback information from the Board meetings with anchor institutions on behalf of cared for and care experienced children. The need to support younger cared-for children in having their views represented was also raised, as they do not have the same opportunities as some older children to feed back their experiences due to their age.

A Member added that Language & Terminology could be a future meeting theme as a shift was taking place from the use of formal and impersonal terminology to a more human-centred approach.

AGREED as follows:

1. That the information provided was received and noted.
2. That all topics suggested during this meeting were considered as themes for future meetings and the next meeting be focussed on Housing.
3. That the Corporate Director of Children's Services and Chair arrange a meeting with our Volunteer Voices/Change Ambassadors ahead of the next Board meeting to collaboratively create the agenda.

24/6

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

None.