

Ofsted's Focused Visit

26th and 27th May 2021

Presentation:
Children's Social Care Scrutiny Committee

27th July 2021



MIDDLESBROUGH
CHILDREN
MATTER



**Our mission is to show
Middlesbrough children
that they matter.**

middlesbroughchildrenmatter.co.uk

Middlesbrough House, Elm Street, Middlesbrough, TS1 2DA
Tel: 01642 000000 • info@middlesbroughchildrenmatter.co.uk

Context:

Ofsted's overall aim:

How has England's social care system delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the pandemic?

- For Middlesbrough that also means 'delivered **and continued to improve**'
- The same methodology as for the inspection in Nov/Dec 2019
- A look across the whole of Children's Services – all of social care and aspects of education and skills.
- 4 social care inspectors and 1 education inspector
- Prior to 2 days on site
 - We supplied Ofsted with documentation, performance information and answered queries.
 - Ofsted interviewed key personnel

COVID: Findings - Strategic

- Leaders invoked their major incident plan swiftly and effectively
- Established a framework for the identification and monitoring of vulnerable children in their communities
- Brought opportunities for different ways of working across the council – revitalising partnerships
- Weekly communications meetings with strategic partners to establish multi-agency pathways
 - School networks
 - Domestic abuse pathway – nationally evaluated
- Successful progress on much of improvement programme but some elements (inevitably) affected by COVID

COVID: Findings - Practice

- Some sws are creative and persistent in their engagement with children despite the restrictions imposed by the lockdown
- Staff have benefited from COVID safe-working practices and the deployment of technology to maintain their engagement of children and families.
- Despite the challenges of the last year staff report feeling supported, liked working for Middlesbrough and understood vision for change.
- The number of children who are Electively Home Educated has increased during the pandemic and there are effective systems to monitor EHE children.

Leadership

Leaders:-

- Positively engaged in a comprehensive programme of improvement
- Introduced
 - A comprehensive 'Audit for Excellence' framework.
 - 'Non – negotiables' – Practice Standards
- Have appropriately prioritised recruitment and the development of the workforce strategy
- Know that there remains significant variability in practice which is not meeting their own expectations regarding the quality of practice
- Do not yet have a sufficient understanding of children who are missing education

Main Findings - Positive

- Demand for a children's social care service has steadily increased over the last year.
- The MACH (front door) has continued to improve
- Case loads are reducing but remain too high for some social workers
- Children are seen regularly and direct work is demonstrably making a difference to their lives.
- Workers are persistent and build good relationships with children so interventions are more effective
- Personal Advisers maintain regular contact with care leavers
- Effective partnership work to identify exploitation risks and trends.
- SWs are increasingly working with children who have multiple and complex needs. This is as a result of a legacy of poor practice.

Main Findings – Areas for Improvement

- The quality of assessment and plans is variable and management oversight and supervision are not suitably evaluative
- Children come into care when they need to but there is some delay in finding the right homes for them
- A lack of suitable foster placements & children's homes
- Too many care leavers not in education, employment or training
- Children's identities and diverse needs are not given sufficient consideration
- Some children experience too many change of social workers. Children told inspectors that they would like to have social workers who stayed with them for a long time.

One Children's Service

Education Matters:-

Significant focus on Children Missing Education

- Effective systems in place to monitor EHE children
- Insufficient knowledge of the circumstances of vulnerable children missing education so their needs are not met. This includes
 - A minority of CLA are on reduced timetables or have no education for too long
 - Some children with special educational needs do not receive a school place within the 20 day timescale
 - A very small number of the above children attend unregistered provision on a part-time basis as their sole provision.

And Finally

New Recommendations – to improve

- Management oversight and actions to ensure that vulnerable children and children in care, including those with special needs and/or disabilities (SEND), receive their full educational entitlement
- The understanding of identity and the diverse needs of children and their families to inform assessment, planning and support

Overall – a positive outcome – we know ourselves and what more needs to be done.

Next Steps – Commissioner’s Report, Ofsted Monitoring Visit