



**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**  
**1<sup>st</sup> JULY 2004**

**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL FOSTERING SERVICE**  
**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND CHILDREN'S GUIDE 2004-5**

**BRENDA THOMPSON - EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR SOCIAL  
SERVICES & HEALTH CARE**

**JAN DOUGLAS - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR SOCIAL  
SERVICES**

---

**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Corporate Parenting Board with:
  - (a) the Statement of Purpose of Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service for the year 2004-5
  - (b) the Children's Guide to Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service for the year 2004-5.

**BACKGROUND**

2. The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services were brought into force on 1st April 2002, after a period of consultation. They are part of the Government's commitment to improving protection for children and raising standards within this area of practise.
3. Prior to the implementation of this legislation, there was no regulatory framework for the conduct of fostering services. National standards were introduced by Fostering Network in 1999 but were not enforceable and it was acknowledged that standards varied widely between agencies. Within the independent sector, an agency could be

established without any need to register and with no consistent minimum standards being applied.

4. The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 have changed this situation. These regulations, and the associated National Minimum Standards, are regulated by the Commission for Social Care Inspection which is an independent, non-governmental public body. The remit of this organisation, in relation to fostering services, is to register and inspect independent fostering agencies and to inspect local authority fostering services.
5. One of the requirements of the Regulations and National Minimum Standards is that each fostering service should produce a Statement of Purpose and a Children's Guide to the Fostering Service. There are clear guidelines about what should be included in these documents. The Regulations also require that, in the case of a local authority, the Statement of Purpose is formally approved by elected members and that it is reviewed, updated and modified at least annually.
6. On 18th December 2002, the Statement of Purpose of Middlesbrough Fostering Service for 2002-3 and the Children's Guide were formally approved by the Corporate Parenting Board. It was also agreed that these documents would be reviewed on an annual basis by the Corporate Parenting Board. The first annual review took place at the Corporate Parenting Board meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2003.
7. The two documents are now being presented to Corporate Parenting Board for the second annual review. A copy of the Statement of Purpose is attached as Appendix 1 and the Children's Guide as Appendix 2.

## **OPTION APPRAISAL**

8. Not applicable to this piece of work.

## **FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS**

9. There are no immediate financial or legal implications in this report. There are no specific ward implications as the Fostering Service covers the whole of Middlesbrough.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

10. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board:
  - (a) formally approves the Statement of Purpose and the Children's Guide for 2004-5.
  - (b) agrees that the next annual review of these documents should take place in April 2005 or as soon as possible thereafter.

## **REASONS**

11. This recommendation is supported by the following reasons:
  - (a) the Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide to the Fostering Service are documents which are required under Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002
  - (b) the review of these documents is required under Regulation 4 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002
  - (c) formal approval of these documents is required under standard 1.3 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- (a) the Fostering Services Regulations 2002
- (b) the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services

**AUTHOR: Judy Yelder, Family Placement Development Officer**  
**TEL NO: 01642 - 303968**

---

Address: Sandringham House, 170a Overdale Road, Middlesbrough  
Website: <http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk>

# APPENDIX 1



## MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL FOSTERING SERVICE



### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE JUNE 2004

Issued by  
Middlesbrough Fostering Service  
Sandringham House  
170a Overdale Road  
Middlesbrough TS3 7EA

## Principles

The work of Middlesbrough Fostering Service is based on the following principles:

- (1) Child focussed  
The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of the fostering process.
- (2) Partnership  
The Fostering Service will work in partnership with parents and children, foster carers and their families, and social work staff and other professionals when delivering the service.
- (3) Anti-discriminatory practice  
The Fostering Service will respect Human Rights and will ensure that there is fair and equal access to all its services. The services it provides will be free from discrimination, prejudice and racism.

## Aims and objectives

The main aim of the Fostering Service provided by Middlesbrough Council is:

- ◆ to provide suitable foster care placements for children who are looked after by Middlesbrough Council.

The Fostering Service will achieve this by:

- ◆ recruiting, preparing and assessing prospective foster carers and their families
- ◆ supporting, developing and retaining approved foster carers and their families
- ◆ working in partnership with the child's social worker to identify a suitable placement when it has been agreed that the child's assessed needs will be met by placement in foster care
- ◆ working in partnership with the child's social worker and other appropriate professionals to identify a suitable alternative placement from an Independent Fostering Agency, where appropriate and agreed by Middlesbrough Children's Panel.

## Standards of care

The work of Middlesbrough Fostering Service is delivered in accordance with the following standards:

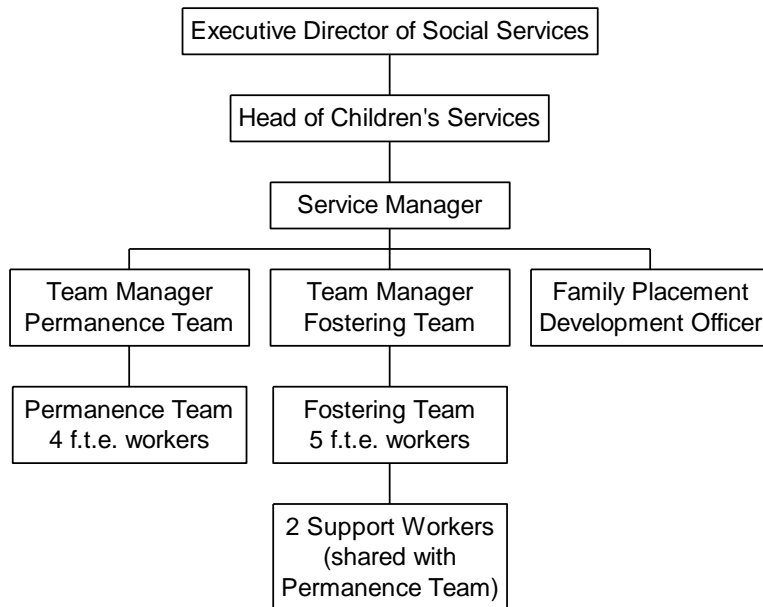
- ◆ UK National Standards for Foster Care 1999
- ◆ the Code of Practice on the recruitment, assessment, approval, training, management and support of foster carers 1999
- ◆ the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2002

In addition to the national standards, Middlesbrough Fostering Service has adopted local standards which underpin its approach to service delivery. These include:

- ◆ responding to enquiries from potential foster carers in a positive and welcoming manner and sending them an information pack within 2 working days of receiving the enquiry
- ◆ a requirement for social workers who join the team to be Level E workers with a minimum of 2 years experience of Children & Families work
- ◆ a commitment to the use of co-working by 2 social workers during the assessment process, in the belief that this leads to a high quality, thorough assessment
- ◆ the use of a banded payments system which recognises the valuable contribution made by foster carers as they develop skills and experience and relates the payment received to the skills and experience they have developed

## Management structure

The Fostering Service of Middlesbrough Council is provided by workers from the Fostering Team and the Permanence Team who are based within the Children & Families area of Social Services. The management structure as at 1<sup>st</sup> June 2004 is shown in the diagram below.



**Details of staff as at 1<sup>st</sup> June 2004**

| Name         | Job title                               | Qualifications  | Experience  |
|--------------|---|---|---|
| Jane Wilson  | Team Manager,<br>Fostering Team         | CSS – 1987<br>CMS – 2001  | With Social Services<br>since 1984. With<br>Fostering Service<br>since 1996.  |
| Tony Kerr    | Social Worker,<br>Fostering Team        | CSS – 1990<br>Practice Teacher<br>Award – 2002                    | With Social Services<br>since 1983. With<br>Fostering Service<br>since 1997.  |
| Jane Young   | Social Worker,<br>Fostering Team        | CSS – 1988<br>PQ1 – 2001<br>PQ Child Care Award<br>– 2004         | With Social Services<br>since 1983. With<br>Fostering Service<br>since 1999.  |
| Jane O’Toole | Social Worker,<br>Fostering Team        | DipSW – 1998  | With Social Services<br>since 1998. With<br>Fostering Service<br>since 2002.  |
| Val Smith    | Social Worker,<br>Fostering Team        | CQSW – 1986   | With Social Services<br>since 1986. With<br>Fostering Service<br>since 2001.  |
| Jill Fawcett | Social Worker,<br>Fostering Team        | DipSW – 2000  | With Social Services<br>since 2000. With<br>Fostering Services<br>since 2003. |
| Liz Watson   | Team Manager,<br>Permanence Team        | CQSW – 1976<br>B.T.E.C Management<br>Studies – 2002               | With Social Services<br>since 1974. With<br>Fostering Service<br>since 1996   |
| Karen Towers | Social Worker,<br>Permanence team       | DipSW – 2001  | With Social Services<br>since 2001. With<br>Fostering Service<br>since 2003.  |
| Val Thompson | Social Worker,<br>Permanence Team       | CQSW – 1990   | With Social Services<br>since 1990. With<br>Fostering Service<br>since 2002.  |
| Judy Yelder  | Family Placement<br>Development Officer | CQSW – 1976<br>Certificate in Training<br>& Development –<br>1992 | With Social Services<br>since 1976. With<br>Fostering Service<br>since 1999.  |

|               |                                     |   |   |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| Val Scott     | Support Worker                      | NVQ Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People – 2003                        | With Social Services since 2000. With Fostering Service since 2000. |
| Aileen Pearce | Support Worker                      | NNEB – 1986   | With Social Services since 1986. With Fostering Service since 2002. |
| Gill Bisp     | Team Clerk, Hyder Business Services | NVQ Business Admin. Level 2 – 1995<br>Level 3 – 1997<br>Level 3 Key Skills – 1997 | With Social Services since 1981. With Fostering Service since 1996. |
| Sue Atkinson  | Team Clerk, Hyder Business Services | B.T.E.C Business Admin – 1996   | With Social Services since 1998. With Fostering Service since 2000. |

There are two vacant social work posts in the Permanence Team as at 1<sup>st</sup> June 2004.

#### **Number of foster carers**

The number of foster carers approved by Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004 was 112.

#### **Number of children placed**

The number of children placed in foster care by Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service on 31<sup>st</sup> March was 176.

#### **Numbers of complaints and their outcomes**

There were no formal complaints in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004.



## **The Services and Facilities provided by the Fostering Service**

The services and facilities provided by Middlesbrough Fostering Service fall into 3 main areas:

(a) Those provided to prospective foster carers:

- Information and advice about fostering
- Initial visits to people expressing an interest in becoming foster carers
- Preparation training for applicants
- Competency-based assessment of applicants using BAAF Form F
- The opportunity to attend the Family Placement Panel when their application is presented

(b) Those provided to foster carers registered with Middlesbrough Fostering Service

- Supervision and support from a named social worker from the Fostering Service
- Practical support (such as transport and activities for children) from a Support Worker, according to need
- A regular newsletter specifically for foster carers registered with Middlesbrough Fostering Service
- Membership of Fostering Network
- Support groups and social events for foster carers
- A support group (known as the Children Who Foster group) for the children of foster carers
- A directory giving details of other foster carers registered with Middlesbrough Fostering Service (providing they have given their permission for their details to be included)
- A foster carers handbook containing information on policies, procedures and practice guidance
- Access to Fostering Network's Advice and Mediation Service
- A programme of induction training for newly approved foster carers
- A programme of post-approval training specifically for foster carers registered with Middlesbrough Fostering Service, consisting of 4 training events a year
- The hire of the training facilities at Middlesbrough Teaching and Learning Centre or other appropriate facilities for use as a venue for the training events
- Financial support for placements, using a banded payments scheme
- Loan of essential equipment or household items to support specific placements

(c) Those provided to social work staff who need a placement for a child looked after by the Council.

These consist of:

- ◆ A duty social worker available during office hours Monday – Friday
- ◆ Provision of a range of foster care placements for children looked after by Middlesbrough Council
- ◆ Liaison with other agencies to identify suitable placements when none are available within Middlesbrough
- ◆ Provision of carers for use by the Emergency Duty Team for placements at evenings, weekends and bank holidays.

## **Procedures and processes used by Middlesbrough Council's Fostering Service**

### Recruitment, assessment and approval

- (1) Recruitment activity is planned in accordance with the Family Placement Recruitment Strategy, which has been in place since January 2000. This uses a continuous, low-key, community development approach with a 'drip feed' of various types of publicity and information. Fostering is marketed as a way of helping a child which also has a benefit for the foster carers. Recruitment activity goes on at 3 different levels - national (for example

Foster Care Fortnight in June); regional (for example joint adverts with Stockton and Redcar&Cleveland in the Evening Gazette) and local (for example the use of 3 standard adverts placed in various publications, creation of 3 different posters, inclusion of family placement information on Middlesbrough's web-site).

- (2) Another key element of the recruitment strategy is that of responding to enquiries in a positive but realistic way. Enquiries are taken by a member of the Fostering Service who takes basic details and answers any initial questions. An information pack is sent out within 2 days of receipt of the enquiry. If the enquirer wants to go on to the next stage, they send back a short form giving basic details of themselves and the type of fostering that interests them.
- (3) The Team Manager will then arrange for 2 Social Workers to visit and give information on the application process and its requirements, the needs of children who are looked after and the role of the carer. They will also find out about the family's circumstances and their motivation to foster. Approximately 4 weeks after this initial visit, the same workers return for a follow-up visit. They ensure that all household members have been seen, and then, following further discussion, an agreement is reached about whether it is appropriate to proceed with an application.
- (4) An application form is given to prospective carers if appropriate. This includes consent for statutory checks for all relevant people in the household. Once the application form has been completed and returned, references are taken up with Criminal Records Bureau and all relevant statutory agencies. This includes contact with the relevant embassy if the applicant has worked abroad and the records of the RAF/Navy/Army if the applicant has been a member of the Armed Forces. References from the applicant's current employer are sought if appropriate. Medical examinations are carried out by the applicant's doctor using the BAAF Medical Form and returned to Middlesbrough Medical Adviser for comments and a recommendation.
- (5) The applicants are notified of the dates of preparation group and given a clear message that the preparation group is an important part of the application process and they are expected to attend each session. The preparation group runs for 5 full days and includes the children of the family if they are of an appropriate age. There is evaluation and feedback at the end of the group, to see if applicants have met the competencies and if not, people are advised not to proceed any further. At this point some people also decide for themselves not to proceed any further.
- (6) The next stage is the home study which is done using the BAAF Form F. It consists of a minimum of 6 sessions with 2 workers, with individual sessions with each applicant in addition. The topics covered include personal background/history/experiences, parenting experiences, birth children's views, the home environment, including dog/pet safety and applicant's own work to show absorption of material from groups. In addition to these sessions with the applicants and their family members, 2 personal referees are interviewed.
- (7) When all the necessary material is available, the Form F is completed by the social workers using contributions from the applicants themselves at appropriate points. The Form F is read and signed by the applicants and is presented to Middlesbrough Family Placement Panel which meets every 2 weeks. Applicants are able to attend the panel meeting when the application is discussed if they wish. The Family Placement Panel considers the Form F and makes a recommendation regarding the application. This recommendation is then approved (or not) by the Executive Director of Social Services. Applicants are then notified in writing of the outcome of their application.

## Support, training and review

- (1) Once a foster carer has been approved by Middlesbrough's Family Placement Panel, they will complete a foster carer agreement and be provided with a Foster Carer Handbook. They will receive ongoing support from a Supervising Social Worker who is a member of the Fostering Service. This Social Worker will visit regularly to supervise the work of the foster carer and help with training and development needs. The minimum visiting frequency is one visit every 8 weeks, but this normally only applies to long-term, stable placements and many foster carers have a much higher level of contact than this. Foster carers also have access to 2 support workers who provide support of a practical nature, such as transport and activities for children.
- (2) In addition to the support provided by Social Workers and Support Workers, all foster carers receive a regular newsletter which keeps them up-to-date with relevant developments within Social Services and elsewhere. They also receive full membership of Fostering Network and access to Fostering Network's Advice and Mediation Service. There are social events for foster carers and regular meetings of a Children Who Foster group. The provision of a free Leisure Card gives opportunities to use Middlesbrough Council's Leisure Facilities at a reduced rate.
- (3) As part of its commitment to the development of the foster care service and increasing the skills of foster carers, Middlesbrough Fostering Service provides a quarterly training programme specifically for foster carers. Foster carers are given support and encouragement to attend and each topic is presented in the morning and the evening in order to fit in with family commitments. A survey is carried out at the end of each year to get foster carers views on the topics for the training programme for the following year.
- (4) In addition to the quarterly training sessions, other training opportunities are available through the in-house training programme provided by Middlesbrough Social Services; through the training programme provided by the Middlesbrough and Langbaugh child and Adolescent Mental Health Service; and through the purchase of places at external training events which are relevant to foster care.
- (5) Foster carers are encouraged to obtain the NVQ Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. All fees are paid by the Middlesbrough Social Services and support is provided by the NVQ Co-ordinator by means of weekly drop-in sessions. Mentoring is provided on a group and individual basis by the NVQ Co-ordinator and by a foster carer who is also employed as an NVQ Assessor. A study group has also operated, set up by foster carers themselves.
- (6) All foster carers who are approved by Middlesbrough Fostering Service have their approval reviewed at least once a year. The review process within Middlesbrough is also used as a means of giving foster carers the chance to give some feedback on the service they receive from Social Services and to evaluate whether the foster carers are meeting the competencies of Middlesbrough Banded Payments Scheme. Foster carers are fully involved in the review process and are given a report to complete prior to the review meeting. They are fully involved in the review meeting which is chaired by a Quality Assurance and Reviewing Officer who is independent of the Fostering Service. After the review meeting, the Q.A.R.O completes a review report with a recommendation which is presented to Family Placement Panel for discussion and approval. Foster carers are able to attend the panel meeting when their review is discussed if they wish. The review recommendation is then approved (or not) by the Executive Director of Social Services and foster carers are notified in writing of the outcome of their review.