



**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD
1st JULY 2004**

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

**BRENDA THOMPSON - EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR SOCIAL
SERVICES AND 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 Adoption Service for the year 2004-5
 - (b) the Children's Guide to Middlesbrough Council Adoption Service for the year 2004-5.

BACKGROUND

2. The Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003 and the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services in England were brought into force on 30th April 2003, 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. The Regulations and the associated National Minimum Standards mean that the operation of adoption agencies is now regulated by the Commission for Social Care Inspection. This is an independent, non-governmental public body whose remit, in relation to adoption

agencies, is to register and inspect voluntary adoption agencies and to inspect local authority adoption services.

4. One of the requirements of the Regulations and National Minimum Standards is that every adoption agency or service should produce a Statement of Purpose and every local authority adoption service should produce a Children's Guide to the Adoption 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.
5. The Statement of Purpose of Middlesbrough Adoption Service for 2003-4 and the Children's Guide were formally approved by the Corporate Parenting Board on 4th September 2003. It was also agreed that they would be reviewed on an annual basis by the Corporate Parenting Board. The two documents are now being presented for their first annual review. A copy of the Statement of Purpose is attached as Appendix 1 and the Children's Guide as Appendix 2.

OPTION APPRAISAL

6. Not applicable to this piece of work.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. 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

9. This recommendation is supported by the following reasons:
 - (a) the Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide to the Adoption Service are documents which are required under Regulations 2

and 3 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003

- (b) the review of these documents is required under Regulation 4 of the same regulations
- (c) formal approval of these documents is required under standard 1.2 of the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services in England.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- (a) the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003
- (b) National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services in England

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Website: <http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk>

APPENDIX 1



MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL ADOPTION SERVICE



STATEMENT OF PURPOSE JUNE 2004

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

The Principles of the Adoption Service

The work of Middlesbrough Council's Adoption Service is based on the following principles:

- (1) Child focussed
The child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of the adoption process.
- (2) Partnership
The Adoption Service will work in partnership with parents and children, adoptive parents and their families, foster carers, social work staff, other professionals and other agencies when delivering the service.
- (3) Anti-discriminatory practice
The Adoption 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.

The Aims and Objectives of the Adoption Service

The main aim of Middlesbrough Council's Adoption Service is:

- ◆ to provide suitable adoptive placements for children who are looked after by Middlesbrough Council and whose assessed need is for an adoption placement

The secondary aims of the Adoption Service are to provide services to meet the needs of:

- ◆ adults who wish to adopt children
- ◆ children whose natural parents are requesting adoption
- ◆ children who have been adopted, and their adoptive families
- ◆ the parents, guardians and other birth relatives of adopted children
- ◆ adults who were adopted as children

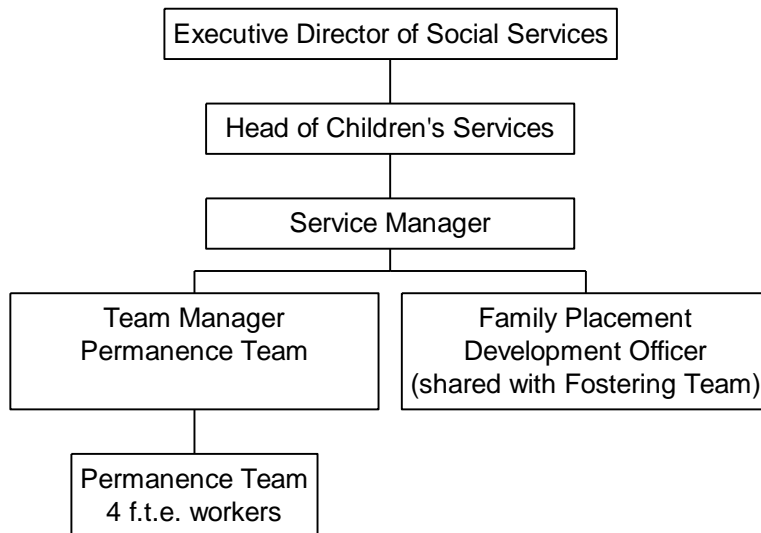
The Functions of the Adoption Service

The main functions of Middlesbrough Council's Adoption Service are:

- ◆ to recruit, prepare, assess and approve adopters
- ◆ to work in partnership with the child's social worker in order to identify suitable adoptive placements for children looked after by Middlesbrough Council
- ◆ to provide counselling for birth parents who are considering relinquishing a child for adoption and to make all the arrangements for the placement if their decision is to place their child for adoption
- ◆ to provide post-adoption support for adoptees, adopters and birth relatives, in partnership with other agencies when appropriate
- ◆ to provide court reports for non-agency adoption applications

The Organisational Structure of the Adoption Service

The Adoption Service of Middlesbrough Council is provided by workers from the Permanence Team which is based within the Children & Families area of Social Services. The organisational structure as at 1st June 2004 is shown in the diagram below.



Details of the Manager of the Adoption Service

The manager of Middlesbrough Council's Adoption Service is:

Ms Maureen Elizabeth Watson (known as Liz)
Sandringham House
170a Overdale Road
Park End
Middlesbrough
TS3 7EA
Phone 01642 - 300870
Fax 01642 - 300849
Email Liz_Watson@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Details of staff of the Adoption Service (as at 1st June 2004)

There are 6 staff employed by Middlesbrough Council for the purpose of the Adoption Service. In addition, there are 2 staff employed by Hyder Business Services who provide administrative support to the Adoption Service. Details of the staff, their relevant qualifications and experience are as follows:

Name	Job title	Qualifications	Experience
Liz Watson	Team Manager, Permanence Team	CQSW - 1976 B.T.E.C. Management Studies 2002	With Social Services since 1974. With the Adoption Service since 1996
Val Thompson	Social Worker, Permanence Team	CQSW - 1990	With Social Services since 1990. With the Adoption Service since 2002.
Karen Towers	Social Worker, Permanence Team	DipSW – 2001	With Social Services since 2001. With the Adoption Service since 2003.
Judy Yelder	Family Placement Development Officer (shared with Fostering Team)	CQSW – 1976 Certificate in Training & Development – 1992	With Social Services since 1976. With the Adoption Service since 1999.
Gill Bisp	Team Clerk, Hyder Business Services (shared with Fostering Team)	NVQ Business Admin. Level 2 – 1995 Level 3 – 1997 Level 3 Key Skills - 1997	With Social Services since 1981. With the Adoption Service since 1996.
Sue Atkinson	Team Clerk, Hyder Business Services (part-time, shared with Fostering Team)	B.T.E.C. Business Admin – 1996	With Social Services since 1998. With the Adoption Service since 2000.

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

The Services and Facilities provided by the Adoption Service

The services and facilities provided by Middlesbrough Adoption Service fall into 8 main areas:

(a) Those provided to prospective adoptive parents:

- Information and advice about adoption
- Initial visits to people expressing an interest in becoming adoptive parents
- Preparation training for applicants
- Assessment of applicants using BAAF Form F
- The opportunity to attend the Family Placement Panel when their application is presented

The above services are provided to people who live within reasonable travelling distance of Middlesbrough and who wish to adopt a child from within the UK. They are also provided to people who wish to adopt a child from outside of the UK but in these instances, the applicants must be resident within the area of Middlesbrough Council.

(b) Those provided to adopters approved by Middlesbrough Adoption Service

- Support from a named member of the Permanence Team throughout the various stages of the matching, linking and placement processes
- A regular newsletter specifically for adopters approved by Middlesbrough Adoption Service.
- Access to all relevant services provided by After Adoption as part of their contract with Middlesbrough Social Services
- The opportunity to have a year's free membership of Adoption UK (a national voluntary organisation which supports adoptive families before, during and after adoption).
- Financial support with expenses related to the introduction and placement of a child, if the child is looked after by Middlesbrough Council.
- An adoption allowance, if the circumstances of the child and the adopters meet the appropriate criteria
- Financial support with expenses related to direct contact with birth relatives, if this is part of the plan for the child

(c) Those provided to children looked after by Middlesbrough Council for whom adoption is the plan

In this situation, the main responsibility for work with the child normally rests with the child's social worker and the Adoption Service works in partnership with the social worker to:

- identify whether there are any adopters approved by Middlesbrough Adoption Service who are a suitable match for the child
- advise and assist with referral to regional consortia and the National Adoption Register if no appropriate local matches are available
- advise and assist with referral to family-finding publications such as Be My Parent and Adoption UK, if no appropriate local or regional matches are available
- receive the initial enquires from people responding to any publicity
- identify whether there are any suitable matches for the child resulting from consortium referrals or publicity
- accompany the child's social worker to visit any potential adoptive families for the child
- provide advice to the child's social worker about the placement and adoption process, especially in instances where the social worker has no previous experience of this area of work
- organise and participate in life appreciation days for children when this is part of the placement plan

(d) Those provided to adopters approved by other agencies with whom a Middlesbrough child is being placed for adoption

- Financial support with expenses related to the introduction and placement of a child
- An adoption allowance, if the circumstances of the child and the adopters meets the criteria
- Financial support with expenses related to direct contact with birth relatives, if this is part of the plan for the child

(e) Those provided to birth parents who request adoption for their child or unborn child

- Counselling about the available options and their implications
- Information, advice and support if the birth parent decides to place their child for adoption
- Making all the arrangements for a suitable pre-adoptive placement if necessary
- Making all the arrangements for a suitable adoption placement
- Provision of a post-adoption post-box service for exchange of information with the adopters of the child
- Financial assistance with expenses related to direct contact with the child and the adoptive family, if this is part of the plan for the child
- Access to all relevant services provided by After Adoption as part of their contract with Middlesbrough Social Services
- Information about other sources of support for birth parents

(f) Those provided to birth parents and other relatives of children looked after by Middlesbrough Council who have been placed for adoption

- Provision of a post-adoption post-box service for exchange of information with the adopters of the child
- Financial assistance with expenses related to direct contact with the child and the adoptive family, if this is part of the plan for the child
- Access to all relevant services provided by After Adoption as part of their contract with Middlesbrough Social Services
- Information about other sources of support for birth parents

(g) Those provided to adopted adults and birth parents/relatives of children who have been adopted in the past

- Counselling
- Access to all relevant services provided by After Adoption as part of their contract with Middlesbrough Social Services
- Information about other sources of support for adopted adults, such as NORCAP

(h) Those provided to other agencies

- Reports to the Court in relation to non-agency adoption applications
- Supervision of placements on request, where another authority has placed a child for adoption with adopters approved by Middlesbrough Adoption Service

Procedures used by Middlesbrough Council's Adoption Service for recruiting, preparing, assessing, approving and supporting prospective adopters

- (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. Recruitment activity goes on at 3 different levels - national (for example Adoption Week); regional (for example joint adverts with Stockton and Redcar&Cleveland in the Evening Gazette) and local (for example the use of 2 standard adverts placed in various publications, adverts in Yellow Pages and the local telephone directory, creation of 2 different posters, inclusion of adoption 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 Adoption 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 child they are interested in adopting.
- (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 for whom adoption is the plan, and the role of the adopter. They will also find out about the enquirer's circumstances and their motivation to adopt. 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 adopters 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's Medical Adviser for comments and a recommendation.
- (5) The applicants are notified of the dates of the 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 4 full days. 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.

- (8) Once adopters have been approved, they will be notified of this in writing and sent written information about the matching process and about their right to adoption leave and maternity and paternity pay. They will receive ongoing support from a social worker who is a member of the Permanence Team. This social worker will visit regularly while they are waiting to be matched with a child. When a possible match is identified, the social worker will discuss the child's situation with them and support them through the process of deciding whether to proceed. When there is a decision to proceed, their social worker will support them through the introduction process and beyond, up to the point at which an adoption order is made, and will liaise closely with the child's social worker. Information will be provided about sources of post-adoption support, such as After Adoption and Adoption UK.

Systems used to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and quality of the Adoption Service

- (1) There is monthly supervision for all staff, including managers. During the supervision of social workers, each case is discussed at least every 3 months.
- (2) Monitoring reports are compiled every 6 months by the Family Placement Development Officer containing information on recruitment levels, initial visit and assessment timescales, placements made and placement timescales. Managers meet to discuss the reports and their implications.
- (3) There is quality assurance by the Panel Adviser of all reports which are presented to the Family Placement Panel.
- (4) There is feedback from Family Placement Panel on the quality of reports and the work that has been carried out.
- (5) There are spot-checks of adoption files by a Service Manager followed by a visit to the adopters.
- (6) There are regular reports to Corporate Parenting Board on the work of the Adoption Service

A summary of the complaints procedure

Complaints about Middlesbrough Adoption Service are dealt with using the complaints procedure of Middlesbrough Council Social Services. This procedure sets out 3 stages to dealing with a complaint.

Stage 1 - The problem solving stage

The complaint is referred to the person best able to deal with it, which is usually the manager responsible for the service. Within 3 days of receiving the complaint, the Complaints Section will send an explanatory leaflet to the person making the complaint and tell them who is looking into the complaint. The person investigating the complaint acknowledges it within 7 days and gives details of what they are going to do. They then write within 28 days to give details of the outcome of their investigation. If there are any reasons why the investigation cannot be completed within 28 days, they will write giving reasons for the delay and set another date.

Stage 2 - The registration stage

If the person making the complaint is not happy with the outcome of the investigation done during Stage 1, they have the right to have the complaint investigated by a more senior officer. If the

complaint is about a service provided to a child, then an Independent Person from outside of the local authority will also be involved at this stage to oversee the process and make sure the complaint is dealt with fairly. The person making the complaint will be given details of the investigating officer within 7 days and the investigating officer will write within 28 days giving details of the outcome of their investigation. If there are any reasons why the investigation cannot be completed within 28 days, they will give reasons for the delay and set another date.

Stage 3 - The review stage

If the person making the complaint is not happy with the outcome of the investigation done during Stage 2, they can ask for the complaint to be considered by a Review Panel. The Review Panel is chaired by an Independent Person from outside of the local authority. The Panel will review Social Services response to the formal Stage 2 complaint and re-examine that response. The panel is normally held within 28 days of receipt of the request for a review. The person making the complaint will be informed of the outcome of the Review Panel within 28 days of its recommendations being received by Social Services.

The Commission for Social Care Inspection

The Adoption Service of Middlesbrough Council is inspected every 3 years by the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

Their Tees Valley Area Office is at:

Unit B
Advance
St Mark's Court
Teesdale
Stockton-on-Tees
TS17 6QX
Phone: 01642 - 628960

The adoption inspections are managed from the North West Regional office which is at:

4th Floor
Unit 1, Tustin Court
Port Way
Preston
PR2 2YQ
Phone: 01772 - 730100

Their National Headquarters are at:

33 Greycoat Street
London
SW1P 2QF
Phone: 020 – 7979 - 2000