



**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD
1st JULY 2004**

**MIDDLESBROUGH FAMILY PLACEMENT PANEL -
ACTIVITY REPORT FOR 2003 - 4**

**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 an overview of the activity of Middlesbrough's Family Placement Panel during the period 1st April 2003 to 31st march 2004.

BACKGROUND

2. Each Local Authority which provides a fostering service and/or acts as an adoption agency is required to establish a panel consisting of social work practitioners experienced in adoption and family placement matters, elected Members and independent persons. The composition of the panel is prescribed by the Adoption Agencies Regulations 1983, amended by the Adoption Agencies and Children Regulations (Arrangements for Placement and Review) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulation 1997 and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.
3. Middlesbrough Council has established a Family Placement Panel which meets the legal requirements in relation to fostering and adoption and therefore can consider cases from both aspects of family placement work. The Panel plays a key role in promoting the welfare of vulnerable children in public care.

4. The Panel has 10 members whose details are given in Appendix 1. It meets fortnightly for half a day and is serviced by officers from the Legal Department, Members Office and the Family Placement Service.
5. The role of the Family Placement Panel is to consider whether:
 - a) Adoption is in the best interests of a particular child and if so, whether an application should be made to free the child for adoption
 - b) A prospective adopter would be a suitable adoptive parent
 - c) An approved adopter would be a suitable adoptive parent for a particular child
 - d) An adoption allowance should be paid for a particular child
 - e) Permanent foster care is in the best interests of a particular child
 - f) A prospective foster carer is suitable to be a foster carer
 - g) A foster carer would be a suitable, permanent foster carer for a particular child
 - h) A foster carer should apply for a Residence Order in respect of a child they are looking after and if so, whether a Residence Order Allowance should be paid.
 - i) The panel also considers reports on the disruption of adoptive and permanent placements, annual reviews of foster carers and 6 monthly reports where either adoption or permanent foster care is the plan.

ACTIVITY DURING 2003-4

6. The Family Placement Panel met on 22 occasions between 1st April 2003 and 31st March 2004. The matters considered by the panel are often complex and at times meetings can be lengthy and demanding. Panel members receive the papers in advance of each meeting and need to read them thoroughly prior to the meeting in order to participate effectively in the discussion.

7. The number of items considered in each category during the year was as follows:

Number of adopters approved	14
Number of children whose adoption plans were approved	26
Number of children who were matched with adoptive parents	26
Number of foster carers approved	9
Number of foster carers who were de-registered	9
Number of children whose long-term fostering plans were approved	4
Number of children who were matched with long-term foster carers	7
Number of foster carer reviews that were considered	42
Number of reports presented for consultation on a specific issue	3
Number of reports presented for approval of a change of plan for a child	6
Number of reports presented for approval of a change of approval category for adopters	2
Number of reports presented giving an update of a situation previously discussed	10

8. The National Minimum Standards for Adoption Services contain the requirement that there should be an annual joint training day with the agency's adoption staff. The first such training day was held on Friday 27th February. The topics covered during the day included:
- ◆ Looking back and looking forward – a recap of recent service developments and a look at those due to be implemented in future
 - ◆ An evaluation of the attendance of applicants and foster carers at Panel meetings

- ◆ 'Are we missing the match' – a presentation and discussion of a proposal from BAAF to alter the assessment and matching process
- ◆ Plans for improvement
- ◆ 'What feelings' - a video of children talking about their experiences of being fostered or adopted.

Unfortunately attendance was affected by severe winter weather but those who attended felt it had been a worthwhile day.

9. During the course of 2003-4, there were inspections by the National Care Standards Commission of both the Fostering and the Adoption Service. As part of the process, an inspector observed a meeting of the Family Placement Panel. The report from the Adoption Inspection was very positive about the Panel and commented on the very good practice which was seen during the observed Panel.

OPTION APPRAISAL

10. Not applicable to this piece of work.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

11. There are no immediate financial or legal implications in this report. There are no specific ward implications as the work of the Family Placement Panel covers the whole of Middlesbrough.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board note the contents of this report.

REASONS

13. This recommendation is supported by the following reasons:
 - (a) Standard 17.3 of the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services in England requires the executive side of the Council to receive written reports on the management and outcomes of the adoption service every 6 months.
 - (b) It is important that elected members are aware of the work of the Family Placement Panel in order that they can effectively fulfil their responsibilities as Corporate Parents to children looked after.

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
- (c) the Fostering Services Regulations 2002
- (d) the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services

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APPENDIX 1**MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY PLACEMENT PANEL JUNE 2004**

Position	Name	Qualifications or Experience
Chair	Jenni Cooke	Head of Children's Services
Vice Chair & elected member	Cllr Brenda Thompson	
Elected member	Cllr John Jones	
Agency social worker	Sandie Dixon	Locality Team Manager
Agency social worker	Julia Landin	Quality Assurance and Reviewing Officer
Independent person	Helen Little	Foster carer for independent agency
Independent person	Irene Harkin	Adoptive parent
Independent person	David Sands	Assistant Head of Inclusion, Education Department
Independent person	Connie O'Neill	Family Placement Team Manager, Hartlepool Social Services
Medical adviser	Dr P Phyu	Consultant Community Paediatrician