

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on 16th December 2004.

PRESENT: Councillor J Jones (Chair), Councillor Brunton (Vice Chair), Councillors, J Taylor, B Thompson and P Thompson

OFFICIALS: J Cooke, L Ferguson, C Kendrick, S Little, T Redmayne, S Robinson and C Wilson, Sean Kershaw

**** PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Thomas Tolmie (Young Persons Representative)
Jenny Brannigan (Young Person)
Paul McKenna (Film Maker)

**** PRESENT AS AN OBSERVER:** Mr B Simpson (Foster Carer)

**** APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors McIntyre and B Taylor

**** DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made at this point of the meeting.

**** MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2004 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

'BACK TO REALITY' – PRESENTATION OF DVD PRODUCED BY YOUNG PEOPLE

The Young Persons Representative introduced the DVD, containing the production named 'Back to Reality' that took place on 28th April 2004 at the Georgian Theatre, in conjunction with Middlesbrough Leaving Care Team and Art 'n' That Productions

Members watched the 15-minute DVD based on the different paths a young person may take should she have chosen not to sit her GCSE examinations.

Members were informed that the group had received £7,000 from the Local Network Fund which would be used to develop 3 further 15-minute productions. It was hoped that young people in Middlesbrough would provide suggestions for themes and story lines.

The Chair commented that the DVD was very enlightening and the Art 'n' That Production Team were thanked for their attendance.

RECOMMENDED that the contents of the DVD be noted.

YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE

C Wilson, Head of South Tees Youth Offending Service submitted a report presenting the Board with a summary of the support available from the Youth Offending Service for Children Looked After, which also highlighted the issues relating to corporate parenting in respect of recent Youth Justice initiatives.

Members were provided with background information to the South Tees Youth Offending Service.

As at 15th November 2004, 13 out of the 128 young people aged between 10 – 17 years who were Looked After in Middlesbrough had offended within the 12 month period November 2003 to November 2004. This equated to 5.53% of the total number of Children Looked After in Middlesbrough. These offenders were subject to a variety of statutory Orders ranging from referral Orders to Detention & Training Orders.

Depending on the level of risk and National Standards requirements, young people were supported by a Youth Offending Services (YOS) Case Manager. YOS was working with 239 young people on statutory Orders in Middlesbrough at the time of the meeting.

Members were informed of the Resettlement Aftercare Provision (RAP) and Community Support Project, which focussed on voluntary support for young people with substance misuse issues and involved working in partnership with many other services.

Since the introduction of mandatory drug testing of young people following charge (not arrest) in Middlesbrough on 1st August 2004, 55 tests have been taken, 7 of which tested positive for cocaine/crack or heroin.

Members were also advised of the Arrest Referral Service that was in place at Teesside Court to provide support and advice to young people arrested. All young people accessing this service were made known to YOS and Social Services, particularly in relation to Children Looked After to ensure communication between agencies.

Information regarding bail/remand and accommodation costs was provided to the Board.

C Wilson confirmed that, through national research, it was evident that young people in residential care were more at risk of offending than those in foster care.

The Youth Offending Service offered to attend a future meeting to provide Members with more in-depth information as to the services it provided.

RECOMMENDED that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive that all staff and carers with Corporate Parenting responsibilities should undertake training in respect of appropriate adult duties, particularly with reference to Mandatory Drug Testing.

THE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENTS OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

The Service Manager for Education and Children Looked After submitted a report presenting the Board with statistical information relating to the educational attainments of Middlesbrough Children Looked After in summer 2004 as was presented to the DfES.

Members were informed that in 2003, just 6% of care leavers aged 16 and over gained five or more GCSE grades A*-C. Furthermore, of those care leavers contacted by councils, 51% were not in education, training or employment and just 1% had progressed to university.

Statistics from the Department of Health (DoH) published in 2004 showed no significant difference between the outcome indicator figures for the academic years 2000 – 2003.

The Service Manager reported on the comparative statistics for academic years 2000/01, 2001/02, 2002/03 and 2003/04 on the following sat by Middlesbrough Children Looked After:-

- GCSE/GNVQ Results
- Key Stage 3 SATS
- Key Stage 2 SATS
- Key Stage 1 SATS

Members discussed extra tuition for Children Looked After and it was confirmed that all requests for individual or extra tuition had been approved. Although Members understood there were many different reasons why individual or extra tuition was either not appropriate or not accepted, it was felt that, where needed, Children Looked After should be encouraged to accept extra help and Board Members discussed how this could be achieved.

A discussion ensued regarding those pupils who were disapplied under Section 364/365 of the 1996 Education Act and the reasons for this. It was felt that this issue needed to be looked at in more depth and progress needed monitoring regarding those pupils who had statements of special education needs (SEN).

RECOMMENDED THAT THE CONTENTS OF THE REPORT BE NOTED.

FOSTERING SERVICE REVIEW

The Service Manager presented a report to Members to share the outcomes of a review of the fostering services of Middlesbrough Council, specifically a review of the Banded Payment Scheme. The Review also considered new initiatives to ensure that Middlesbrough's fostering services was in line with national and regional developments and the challenges presented by an increased independent sector, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

In May 2004, a work programme for the following year was developed which included the need to review the Banded Payment Scheme that had been operational for four years and was due for review.

Due to an increasingly competitive market to recruit and retain foster carers, Middlesbrough Council had seen a continued use of the independent sector to meet gaps in services to deal with capacity and demand issues. This resulted in the implementation of a Commissioning Strategy.

Whilst undertaking the review, Middlesbrough Council Carers were consulted via a survey and a Consultation Evening took place for Band C Carers.

Members were given information to the background and aims of the Banded Payment Scheme as set out in the report and informed that, at the time of this meeting, the carer profile was as follows:-

BAND	NO. OF CARERS
Band A = Basic allowance for the child	47
Band B = Basic allowance plus enhanced payment of £50	33
Band C = Basic allowance plus enhanced payment of £150	31
TOTAL	111

Members were informed that in Middlesbrough, the basic fostering allowance was, on average, 14% below the recommended Fostering Network minimum rate. However, having a Banded Payment Scheme placed Middlesbrough in a better position than other authorities that made no additional enhanced payments.

Overall, feedback from those foster carers who responded to the survey was positive, with 75% feeling that times scales for progression from one band to another were about right and 90% feeling criteria for the same was about right. However, it was apparent that the scheme was not an incentive for becoming or remaining a foster carer with Middlesbrough Council.

Members discussed payments to foster carers in detail, focussing particularly on the following issues:-

- Should carers be eligible to join a Pension Fund and should contributions be made by the Local Authority?
- Retainer payments
- Banding Scheme, in particular the payments for those caring for teenage Children Looked After

Members were informed that further discussions would take place between the Executive Member Early Years, members of the Children Look After Team and Senior Officers on the recommendations made in this report.

RECOMMENDED that the contents of the report be noted.