

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on 27 January 2005.

PRESENT: Councillor J Jones (Chair), Councillor Brunton (Vice-Chair), Councillors Brady, P Thompson and A E Ward.

OFFICIALS: M Chatterjee, J Cooke, M Cooper, K Kendrick, D Johnson, S Little, G Watson, A White, J Wilson, J Young.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were submitted on behalf of Councillors McIntyre, B Taylor, J Taylor and Mrs B Thompson, also S Kershaw, T Tolmie and Mr B Simpson (Foster Carer).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2004 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

LEAVING CARE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

The Annual Report of Middlesbrough Council's Leaving Care Service for the year 2004 had been circulated to the Board prior to the meeting.

This set out information on the aims and objectives of the Leaving Care Service, the service and facilities provided, staffing details and developments and issues for 2005. These included the development of a supported lodgings scheme, the recruitment of some new 'Young Advisers' and the need to increase the numbers of young people in education, training and employment

The Team Manager of the Leaving Care Service was in attendance at the meeting to present the report and answer Members' questions.

During the ensuing discussion reference was made to the following:

- That details of the financial support and assistance available to young people leaving care and moving on to higher education be reported to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.
- That a method of interpreting and celebrating the successes and achievements of young people leaving care be considered. Reference was made to the importance of acknowledging not only academic achievements but also those steps taken to establish and lead independent and successful lives.

RECOMMENDED that the contents of the report be noted.

CONNEXIONS

The Head of Community Education submitted a report to update the Board on the specific support arrangements to Children Looked After being made by the Connexions Service in Middlesbrough.

Background information was provided relating to significant milestones in the development of the Service since previously reported to the Board in January 2002. Particular reference was made to the developing role of the Personal Adviser (PA) and the right of every young person aged 13-19 to have direct access to such an Adviser.

It was noted that two of the Middlesbrough Advisers were specifically working with a Children Looked After caseload and had developed a particular specialism with these children, attending case reviews and sharing information.

There were proposals for them to attend an event for carers in February 2005 which would also be attended by foster carers. The Connexions Service also offered a mentoring service specifically designed to support parents/carers and their families.

The Local Management Committee had previously secured £50K investment for the refurbishment of premises at Park Road North to provide a facility for vulnerable young people, including those leaving care. Connexions was working very closely with the Leaving Care Team based in these premises and a Personal Adviser funded by the European Social Funded was placed within this team to work specifically with young people leaving care.

The target performance indicator of a reduction in the number of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) had led the Service to concentrate a specific resource at Children Looked After in Middlesbrough who were more likely to be in this NEET category. They were, therefore, automatically seen as a special target group.

Meera Chatterjee, a Co-ordinator for one of the three teams of Personal Advisers within Connexions, was welcomed to the meeting and provided background information on the role and workload of the Advisers.

The Chair thanked officers for their attendance. The good work that had been undertaken by the Connexions Service to meet the entitlement of every young person aged 13-19 access to a Personal Adviser, was acknowledged by the Board.

RECOMMENDED that the information presented be noted.

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER – STATISTICAL UPDATE

Statistical information relating to Children Looked After by Middlesbrough Council was presented by the Children's Planning Officer. This was in line with Government guidance for elected Members of corporate parenting to receive regular statistical updates on the numbers of children being looked after by the authority.

Tables of comparative figures for placements of children as at September 2004 and March 2004 were provided, which identified an overall decrease of 0.4%. It was noted that the number of children looked after as a proportion of the population was still above the national average of fifty five per ten thousand in the 0-17 year age group. Middlesbrough was sixty seven per ten thousand with this number being unlikely to fall significantly in the short term.

Discussion ensued and reference was made to the shortage and high cost of specialist residential placements outside of the area and the various regional initiatives that were being undertaken to look at this issue.

NOTED

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL - ADOPTION SERVICE – STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND CHILDREN'S GUIDE 2004/05

The Acting Service Manager presented the Board with updated versions of the following:

- a) Statement of Purpose of Middlesbrough Council's Adoption Service – 2004/05
- b) Children's Guide to Middlesbrough Council's Adoption Service - 2004/05

Under the requirements of the Regulations and National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services 2003 every adoption agency or service should produce a Statement of Purpose and a Children's Guide to the Adoption Service.

Clear Guidelines indicate the content of the documents and the Regulations also require that the Statement be reviewed, updated, modified and subsequently approved by elected members at least annually.

Accordingly, these documents have recently been amended to reflect that the Adoption Service has become part of the Children, Families and Learning Department of Middlesbrough Council and also to incorporate various staff changes.

RECOMMENDED as follows:

1. That the Statement of Purpose and the Children's Guide for Middlesbrough Council's Adoption Service for 2004/05 be noted .
2. That the Executive formally approve the documents and authorise their subsequent annual review.

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL – FOSTERING SERVICE – STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND CHILDREN'S GUIDE 2004/05

The Acting Service Manager presented the Board with updated versions of the following:

- c) Statement of Purpose of Middlesbrough Council's Fostering Service – 2004/05
- d) Children's Guide to Middlesbrough Council's Fostering Service - 2004/05

Under the requirements of the Regulations and National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services 2003 every fostering service should produce a Statement of Purpose and a Children's Guide to the Fostering Service.

Clear Guidelines indicate the content of the documents and the Regulations also require that the Statement be reviewed, updated, modified and subsequently approved by elected members at least annually.

Accordingly, these documents have recently been amended to reflect that the Fostering Service has become part of the Children, Families and Learning Department of Middlesbrough Council and also to incorporate various staff changes.

RECOMMENDED as follows:

1. That the Statement of Purpose and the Children's Guide for Middlesbrough Council's Fostering Service for 2004/05 be noted .
2. That the Executive formally approve the documents and authorise their subsequent annual review.

ADVOCACY FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES – POLICY AND GUIDANCE

A draft Advocacy Policy and guidance document in relation to advocacy for children, young people and their families had been circulated to the Board. This set out the approach and procedures to be followed by staff in relation to promoting and supporting access to advocacy.

The Children's Participation Officer was in attendance at the meeting to answer Members' questions and confirmed that advocacy information was also available for children but presented in a more simple and clearer format.

RECOMMENDED as follows:

1. That the Advocacy Policy and guidance document be noted.
2. That the Executive approve the Policy and guidance documents.

