
CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on 21 April 2005.

PRESENT: Councillor Brunton (Vice-Chair – in the Chair), Councillors F McIntyre, P Thompson and J Taylor .

OFFICIALS: J Cooke, M Cooper, D Johnson, C Kendrick, S Little, L Morris, D Poskett, D Sands, J Wilson, J Young.

****PRESENT BY INVITATION:** B Simpson (Foster Carer) and T Tolmie.

****APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors J Jones (Chair), B Taylor, Mrs B Thompson and A E Ward.

****DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

****MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2005 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

THE CURRENT AND POTENTIAL INVOLVEMENT OF MIDDLESBROUGH SPORT AND LEISURE WITH CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

A report of the Sport and Leisure Service Operations Manager was presented to inform Members of the Board of the current opportunities and those with potential for further development to enable young people looked after greater access to sport and physical activity opportunities.

The Sport and Leisure Service Plan 2004-05 together with “Active Middlesbrough” 2003–2008 – a strategy for sport and physical activity in Middlesbrough - were circulated at the meeting. Copies of these documents would also be placed in Members’ Resources.

The various leisure centres and parks available within Middlesbrough were indicated in the report and it was pointed out that the overriding aim of the service was to ‘make more people active’.

The report suggested that there were possible benefits to young people from engaging in physical activity including Health Implications, a possible reduction in Crime and the Creation of Safer communities. Raising physical activity was one of the six themes of the Government’s White Paper ‘Choosing Health’ 2004 and was also part of the Mayor’s Reduction Agenda.

A summary was provided of the work that had been undertaken within the service to support the involvement of Children Looked After in sport and physical activity. Paragraph 17 set out examples of activities and schemes adopted in recent years that had enabled greater levels of participation by young people looked after.

In order to further develop work with young people looked after, various ideas for activity development were highlighted in paragraph 21. However reference was made to the need for appropriate funding in order for the Leisure Service to also meet income targets and for these schemes not to impinge on other service users or the overall service.

The following initiatives were currently being considered for development to enable greater levels of participation by young people looked after.

- Purchase and distribution of a junior ‘Healthy Habit Card’ (access to swimming and gym sessions) with a similar card tailored for younger children.
- Allocation of pre-purchased places on coaching courses or on holiday activity courses delivered through Sports Development - limited places available.

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- Vouchers or free or discounted access to recreational swimming sessions.
 - Subsidised Leisure Link cards for foster families, a previous initiative to be revisited.
 - Activity courses specifically for young people looked after

Availability of sports opportunities, development of skill based courses for older young people (life saving, first aid) and promotion and induction to junior fitness sessions were also highlighted.

The Sport and Leisure Service would be responsive to client need and would seek to involve partners in Streetscene in connection with activities in parks and countryside spaces.

Discussion ensued and reference was made to the following:

There was a need for Middlesbrough Council to prioritise the needs of Children Looked After and every Service Plan should contain proposals for these young people..

Due to lack of available resources to support Children Looked After in summer activities, it was suggested that Leisure Services be requested to ascertain the possibility of allocating a specific place for a child looked after on each summer scheme/course and also explore the possibility of the provision of a free swimming pass.

Young people looked after wanted to participate and not be made to feel different. However, in general, out of school activities were not supported by Children Looked After. It was suggested that these young people could be asked what out of school activities they were engaged in and if not why not.

It was acknowledge that it would be helpful if prior information was provided on available activities to assist participants to feel more at ease and confident and it was agreed that this was an area where communication could be improved. A nominated person in Sport and Leisure could establish a link to transfer this information to Children Looked After. There were also issues of transport to access these out of school activities

The Chair thanked the officer for the informative presentation and the Board supported the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDED as follows:

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That the Executive be advised that opportunities in sport and leisure were currently available to young people looked after with the capacity to increase delivery.
3. That the Executive be advised that Members should advocate the uptake of opportunities, with respect to the benefits available through participation, to the relevant partners through Council structures.

UPDATE REGARDING PROMOTING THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

A report of the Executive Director of Children, Families and Learning was presented to update the Corporate Parenting Board in respect of the implementation of local procedures to promote the health of Children Looked After.

Initial information had previously been presented to the Board in May 2004 based on the Department of Health document promoting the Health of Children Looked After, a model for best practice which emphasised the benefits of 'holistic' over 'clinical' assessment and required the production of a health plan for all Children Looked After..

An overview of activity and outcomes since May 2004 was contained in the report with the practical guidance for health assessments and the Health Action Plan prepared by the Health Co-ordinator attached for information.

The continuing work of Middlesbrough Council and Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust in developing services to promote the health of Children Looked After and young people was set out in paragraphs 4-17. Reference was made to the completed information sharing protocol, production of a substance misuse policy by the Operations Health Group and the creation of the role of Nurse Co-ordinator for Children Looked After. However, this post had subsequently reverted to part-time due to pressures within the Health Visitor service.

Initial health assessments of all Children Looked After had now been completed by Doctor Phyu and a data base was now in place for these health plans. The Nurse Co-ordinator would undertake reassessment or referrals as required.

Information was also provided on the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Looked After Children's Service (CAMHS LAC Service) which had been operational for 13 months and was currently working with 38 young people. 75 Children Looked After had been referred and seen in the last year. It was noted that this Service was to be formally reviewed in April 2005 with the outcome being reported to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

A joint initiative with Redcar and Cleveland and Middlesbrough Councils had been held on 5 March 2005 when young people looked after aged 10-14 had been invited to attend a health event and share their experiences, views and ideas regarding health care. The feedback report from this event had just been received.

RECOMMENDED as follows:

1. That the contents of the report and the progress made be noted.
2. That the Executive be advised to endorse the continued work of Middlesbrough Council and Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust in developing services to promote the health of looked after children and young people.

MIDDLESBROUGH LEAVING CARE SERVICE – SUPPORTED LODGING POLICY

A report of the Executive Director of Children, Families and Learning presented the Supported Lodgings Scheme Policy for Middlesbrough Leaving Care Service. The Policy was a comprehensive document covering all aspects of the proposed Scheme and was appended to the report.

Background information advised that the Leaving Care Team wished to establish this Supported Lodgings Scheme to provide eight placements for young people leaving residential or foster care in the current financial year. Funding for the project would be achieved within the present budget provision.

This Scheme would enhance the supported accommodation currently available for the benefit of young people leaving care and formalise arrangements with existing foster carers where young people post 18 years were remaining looked after by them.

During discussion Members expressed their support for the scheme given that there was a gap in provision and with bed and breakfast accommodation considered to be unsuitable.

In response to a query regarding opportunities for young people leaving care and not in supported lodgings the Leaving Care Service Team Manager responded that there were a range of options and support available including accommodation provided by Endeavour Housing.

RECOMMENDED as follows:

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That the Executive be advised to approve the policy document.

PAYMENTS TO FOSTER CARERS FOR 2005/2006

A report of the Executive Director of Children, Families and Learning was submitted to inform the Board of the allowances which would be payable to foster carers as from 9 April 2005.

Background information provided details of the Banded Payments Scheme for foster carers which had been in operation since January 2000.

Since the scheme had been implemented payments had been reviewed annually and in most years the Band A payments had been increased in line with inflation. In 2003 grant funding had meant that the Band A allowances had been increased by 10%.

However, the Board were advised due to the lack of additional funding and continued budgetary pressures within the Council the increase for 2005/06 would be 2% which was in line with inflation and consistent with the Council's overall financial strategy. The increase would apply to Band A allowances only, other payments had not been increased.

Appendix 1 to the report provided details of the rates of allowances to be paid for 2005/06.

Mr B Simpson, a Middlesbrough Foster Carer, who was in attendance at the meeting, stated that Band A carers were unhappy with the 2% increase which in monetary terms was a £2.55 per child increase. The payments for Band B and C carers had not altered for five years and these foster carers felt exploited and unhappy. However, they were loyal to Middlesbrough Council and had not left to work for independent agencies.

In response Members were advised that it was not possible for Middlesbrough Council to compete with the rates paid by the independent agencies but they were endeavouring to close the gap.

RECOMMENDED as follows:

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That the Executive be advised to note the new payment to Foster Carers for 2005/06.

WINNING TEAM CONSULTATION – VERBAL REPORT

The Children's Participation officer presented a verbal report on "A Winning Team?"

This consultation initiative, funded by the Football Foundation, was aimed at promoting and celebrating the participation of children in care in organised sport and leisure activities.

Middlesbrough Council had participated in the research project and the Council's Sports Development Team were featured on page 19 of the information booklet circulated at the meeting. A copy had also been placed in the Members' Resources.

During discussion reference was made to the recent regional seminar which had been attended by the Vice Chair and Officers, a funding day on 12 May and the recommendations set out in the booklet on page 29 which were supported by the Board.

RECOMMENDED as follows:

1. That the information reported be noted.
2. That the Executive be advised to support the recommendations as set out on page 29 of "A Winning Team" project booklet.

****EXCLUSION – PRESS –PUBLIC**

Ordered that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following agenda item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government act 1972.

CHILDREN MISSING FROM PLACEMENT – UPDATE REPORT

An exempt report of the Executive Director of Children, Families and Learning was presented to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with information relating to the number and circumstances of children who had gone missing from placement in Middlesbrough between September 2004 and March 2005.

Background information was set out together with details of the Middlesbrough Council 's and Cleveland Police's agreed joint protocol for responding to children missing from placement . Details of four actual instances of children going missing from their placements since the last report in September 2004 were also summarised .

RECOMMENDED as follows:

1. That the information in the report and the issues in relation to Children Looked After missing from placement be noted.
2. That the Executive be advised to endorse the actions taken by officers to develop and implement the Joint Protocol.