

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**ANNUAL INSPECTION FOR MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL
FOSTERING SERVICE**

**JAN BRUNTON - EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR
CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**TERRY REDMAYNE - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR
CHILDREN, FAMILIES & LEARNING**

21ST JULY 2005

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to share the findings and outcome of the most recent inspection of Middlesbrough's Fostering Service with members of the corporate parenting board. The inspection took place from 21st February 2005 and the full report, which is attached, was received on 2nd June 2005.

BACKGROUND

2. This is the third inspection of the fostering service undertaken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) formerly the Care Standards Commission, since the National Minimum Standards for fostering services and the related Fostering Service Regulations (2002) came into force.

3. The role of the CSCI is to;
 - *Promote improvement in Social Care.*
 - *Inspect all Social Care – for adults and children – in the public, private and voluntary sectors.*
 - *Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of Social Care and on the state of the Social Care market.*
 - *Inspect and assess ‘Value for Money’ of Council Social Services.*
 - *Hold performance statistics on Social Care.*
 - *Publish the ‘Star Ratings’ for Council Social Services.*
 - *Register and inspect services against national standards.*
 - *Host the Children’s Rights Director Role.*
4. The lead inspector Darren Hobson, at the outset of this inspection, outlined that the modus operandi and final report would be markedly different to those of previous inspections. In essence, the focus would be on outcomes for children and young people with less emphasis on the minutiae of adherence to specific standards, which has been a criticism of the CSCI inspections of the past. This would be in keeping with the ethos underpinning ‘Every Child Matters’ (DFES 2004).
5. The ‘summary of inspection findings’ (pages 6 and 7 of the attached report) reflects this less bureaucratic approach and describes Middlesbrough’s fostering service using the five key themes of ECM. Of particular note was the response of Children Looked After and their social workers to the Commission’s request for feed back on the service. The inspector received an uncommonly high number of completed questionnaires, so we can be confident that the findings are truly reflective of service users’ perceptions.
6. The Fostering Service has implemented all statutory requirements from its last inspection and there are 4 to be met from this (page 11 of CSCI report) which are;
 - *Maintaining children’s documentation on the file of the carer with whom they are placed.*
 - *Ensuring schedule 6 (FS Regs 2002) information is included in foster placement agreements.*
 - *Ensuring all Carers have a current safe care and Health and Safety audit which is evident on file.*

- *Maintenance of a foster carer and children's register.*
7. The good practice recommendations (page 12 of CSCI report) are that we should;
- *Identify an individual within the service to deputise in the absence of the manager.*
 - *Ensure that the foster carer's handbook includes guidance for assisting young people with preparing for adulthood*
8. Tony Kerr, acting Team Manager at the time of inspection, wrote an action plan, also attached, which has been accepted by the Commission.
9. In summary this inspection demonstrated that Middlesbrough fostering service had;
- *No major shortfalls.*
 - *Five minor shortfalls (see action plan).*
 - *18 standards met in full.*
 - *5 standards met to a commendable level.*
10. The inspector's comments include;
- *"Middlesbrough Council provides an effective fostering service – well managed – held in high regard by Carers".*
 - *"The quality of Form F assessments is very good and comprehensive".*
 - *"Support for Carers is a strength of the Service".*
 - *Children commented "My life in Social Services is good – the social workers are really nice. My Carers are great...I have never been happier in my life".*
- and*
- *"It is the considered judgement of the inspectors that Middlesbrough Fostering Service significantly contributes towards positive outcomes for the children placed with foster carers by the Service".*

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

11. The only financial implication arising from this report is the suggestion of ensuring there is a 'deputy' in the absence of the Fostering Team Manager. This issue is already being considered. A potential legal implication would be none – adherence to or a breach of the statutory requirements. This could ultimately result in prosecution if the deficiency is not remedied. There are no Ward implications and the report will be of interest to all members.

RECOMMENDATION

12. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the information relating to the Fostering Service Annual Inspection Report.

REASONS

13. The Council is responsible for providing high quality care for its children.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- *The National Minimum Standards and Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and*
- *The Commission for Social Care Inspection Report 2005.*

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JW/JM/7/7/05

APPENDIX 2

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL FOSTERING SERVICE ACTION PLAN IN RELATION TO COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL CARE INSPECTION 21 FEBRUARY 2005

Statutory Requirements:

No	Regulation	Standard	Action being taken to address statutory requirements	Completion date
1	22 & 27	FS24FS8	<p>Supervising Social Worker to monitor and follow up if the Foster Carer and the Supervising Social Worker have not received the information.</p> <p>Foster Carers to inform their Supervising Social Worker if they do not receive the necessary paperwork – Action - Foster Carer</p> <p>Supervising Social Worker's request for the information from the child's Social Worker will initially be verbal but if not received a memo will be sent with a copy of the memo being entered in the Foster Carer's file. Action - SSW</p> <p>In the Supervising Social Worker's supervision the Fostering Manager will check whether the relevant documentation is on the file. Action – Tony Kerr/Jane Wilson</p>	1.6.05
2	34	FS10	Organise a working group including a representative from the Fostering Service, a Foster Carer and representatives from the Children & Families Service. Devise either guidance or new documentation. Action – Tony Kerr	1.8.05
3	12 & 27	FS6	Fostering Manager to audit the Foster Carer's files to ensure relevant documentation is up to date. Action – Tony Kerr/Jane Wilson	1.8.05
4	22 & 27	FS25	<p>Children's Register now complete and the information is on the main computer system. This information is updated as and when a child's circumstances change.</p> <p>Information re Foster Carers is held on a database but some information needs adding to this. Action – Tony Kerr/Jane Wilson</p>	<p>Done</p> <p>1.8.05</p>

Recommendations:

No	Refer to Standard	Action being taken to address recommendations
1	FS5	To be discussed with senior management
2	FS14	This will be completed by Tony Kerr and be in the new version of the handbook.