

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**MIDDLESBROUGH FAMILY
PLACEMENT PANEL – ACTIVITY
REPORT FOR OCTOBER 2004 TO
MARCH 2005**

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

**PAUL THOMPSON – EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR EDUCATION &
SKILLS**

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CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LEARNING**

21st July 2005

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 October 2004 to 31st March 2005.

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 and is serviced by officers from the Legal Department, Members Office and the Family Placement Service. It meets fortnightly for half a day.
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 FROM 1st OCTOBER 2004 TO 31st MARCH 2005

6. The Family Placement Panel met on 11 occasions between 1st October 2004 and 31st March 2005. 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 this 6 month period were as follows:

Number of adopters approved	8
Number of children whose adoption plans were approved	9
Number of children who were matched with adoptive parents	9
Number of reports presented for approval of a change of registration category for foster carers	1
Number of foster carers who were de-registered	5
Number of children whose long-term fostering plans were approved	3
Number of children who were matched with long-term foster carers	8
Number of foster carer reviews that were considered	37
Number of reports presented for approval of a change of plan for a child	10
Total numbers of items considered	90

8. There was an inspection of the Fostering Service by the National Care Standards Commission in February 2005. As part of the process, an inspector observed a meeting of the Family Placement Panel. The Panel met all the required standards and was commended for several aspects of its practice.

OPTION APPRAISAL

9. Not applicable to this piece of work.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

10. 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

11. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the information relating to the Family Placement Panel.

REASONS

12. 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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