

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

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

PRESENT: Councillor Brunton (Chair): Councillors Brady, J Taylor and P Thompson.

OFFICIALS: J Cooke, M Cooper, D Johnson, C Kendrick, S Little, S Robinson, L Watson, J Wilson.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were submitted on behalf of Councillors Hubbard, McIntyre, B Taylor, Mrs B Thompson and A E Ward 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 9 June 2005 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

CARING FOR THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER AWAY FROM HOME

The Service Manager for Children Looked After Services reported on the findings of an Agenda Event which had been held on 5 March 2005 by Investing in Children.

Background information was set out on the work of the Investing in Children organisation which had been created in County Durham in the mid 1990's. The organisation aimed to work in partnership with children and young people to promote their best interests and enhance their quality of life.

This initiative had been commissioned at a meeting of the Looked After Health Group in October 2004. It had been recognised that this event would generate useful information and the views and wishes of children looked after from Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland on the health assessment process established.

The Agenda Day had involved 11 young people getting together to focus on a particular question and to agree the issues on the 'agenda'. Investing in Children used Agenda Days as a starting point for any particular project.

An outline of the event and the results of the Agenda Day were attached as an appendix to the report. These findings would be used to inform future practice and service development for the health assessments of children looked after. It was proposed that this report would be the main agenda item on the next Looked After Health Group meeting on 3 August 2005.

RECOMMENDED as follows:

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That the Executive be advised to note the findings of the Agenda Day and endorse the work of the Looked After Health Group to incorporate these findings into future development of health services for children looked after.

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL ADOPTION SERVICE – STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND CHILDREN'S GUIDE – 2005/06

The Permanence Team Manager presented the Board with updated version of:

- a) The Statement of Purpose of Middlesbrough Council's Adoption Service for 2005/06.

- b) The Children's Guide to Middlesbrough Council's Adoption Service for 2005/06.

It was noted that the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003 and the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services in England had come into force on 30 April 2003. One of the requirements of the Regulations and National Minimum Standards was that every adoption agency or service should produce a Statement of Purpose and every Local Authority adoption service should produce a Children's Guide to the Adoption Service.

Clear guidelines were prescribed within the Regulations regarding the content of both documents and in the case of Local Authorities the Statement of Purpose must be formally approved by Elected Members and be reviewed, updated and modified at least annually.

Both documents were appended to the report and were now being presented to the Board for the second annual review.

RECOMMENDED as follows:

1. That the Executive be advised to formally approve the Statement of Purpose and the Children's Guide for 2005/06.
2. that the next annual review of these documents take place in April 2006 or as soon as possible thereafter.

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL ADOPTION SERVICE – ANNUAL REPORT 2004/05

The Permanence Team Manager presented the Board with the Annual Report of Middlesbrough Council's Adoption Service for 2004/05.

The Annual Report was appended to the report and provided details of the principles, aims, objectives and functions of the Adoption Service, the services and facilities provided, staffing during 2004/05, activity and developments during 2004/05 and developments and issues for 2005/06.

It was noted that the Annual Report was intended to be a stand-alone document. However, some of the material was also contained in the statement of Purpose for the Adoption Service. Section 5, 6 and 7 of the Annual Report contained information which did not appear in the Statement of Purpose.

During discussion it was queried whether in future the Annual Report could include under paragraph 6 - Levels of activity for the year - the previous year's figures for comparison.

Reference was also made to the ongoing local partnership initiative to recruit more long-term carers, details of which would be reported to the next meeting of the Board.

RECOMMENDED as follows:

1. That the information presented be noted.
2. That the Executive be advised to note the information relating to the Adoption Service Annual Report.

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL FOSTERING SERVICE : STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND CHILDREN'S GUIDE 2005/06

The Fostering Team Manager presented the Board with updated versions of the following:

1. The Statement of Purpose of Middlesbrough Council's Fostering Service for the year 2005/06
2. Children's Guide to Middlesbrough Council's Fostering Service for the year 2005/06.

It was noted that the Fostering Services Regulation and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services came into force on 1 April 2002. One of the requirements of the Regulations and the National Minimum Standards was that each fostering service should produce a Statement of Purpose and a Children's Guide to the Fostering Service. Both documents had clear guidelines prescribed within the Regulations regarding their content. In the case of Local Authorities, the Statement of Purpose must be formally approved by Elected Members and be reviewed, updated and modified at least annually.

Copies of the Statement of Purpose and the Children's Guide were appended to the report and were being presented for the third annual review.

During discussion reference was made to the following:

- The level of independent support which it was necessary to buy-in for those carers who lived outside the Middlesbrough area but cared for Middlesbrough children.
- The need for funding for a joint project with Redcar and Cleveland Council to develop a pool of specialist foster care resources.

RECOMMENDED as follows:

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That the Executive be advised to formally approve the Statement Of Purpose and the Children's Guide for 2005/06.
3. That the Executive be advised to approve that the that the next annual review of these documents should take place in April 2006 or as soon as possible thereafter.

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL FOSTERING SERVICE – ANNUAL REPORT 2004-05

The Fostering Team Manager presented the Board with the Annual Report of Middlesbrough Council's Fostering Service for 2004/05.

The Annual Report was appended to the report and provided details of the principles, aims, objectives and functions of the Fostering Service, the services and facilities provided, staffing during 2004/05, activity and developments during 2004/05 and developments and issues for 2005/06.

It was noted that the Annual Report was intended to be a stand-alone document. However, some of the material was also contained in the statement of Purpose for the Fostering Service. Section 5, 6 and 7 of the Annual Report contained information which did not appear in the Statement of Purpose.

Reference was made to the two Annual Reports which had been considered at the meeting. These had raised no issues. It was suggested, therefore, that the reports could be featured in a press release to provide some positive publicity for Middlesbrough Council's Fostering and Adoption Services. The Chair agreed that this could be considered when the information was presented to the Executive.

RECOMMENDED as follows:

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That the Executive be advised to note the information relating to the Fostering Service Annual Report..

ANNUAL INSPECTION FOR MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL FOSTERING SERVICE

The Fostering Team Manager submitted a report to present the findings and outcome of the most recent inspection of Middlesbrough's Fostering Service which took place on 21 February 2005. A copy of the full report was attached to the submitted report.

The inspection had been undertaken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and was the third since the National Minimum Standards for fostering services and the related fostering service regulations (2002) had come into force.

The report summarised brief information on the role of the CSCI, outlined the four statutory requirements from this inspection which were to be met and highlighted the good practice recommendations.

An action plan which had been written at the time of the inspection by the acting team Manager had been accepted by the Commission and was appended to the report.

The inspection had demonstrated that Middlesbrough's fostering service had no major shortfalls, fine minor shortfalls, 18 standards had been met in full and 5 standards had been met to a commendable level.

The inspector's comments had been included in paragraph 10 and stated that:

"It was the considered judgement of the Inspectors that Middlesbrough Fostering Service significantly contributed towards positive outcomes for the children placed with foster carers by the Service".

During the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- Congratulations were extended to staff concerned for their efforts to achieve the very positive report.
- It was felt that it would be appropriate for a press release to be issued when the report was recommended to the Executive to highlight this achievement
- It was suggested that positive publicity for Middlesbrough Council's fostering service might aid the recruitment of new foster carers.

RECOMMENDED as follows:

1. That the information contained in the report be noted.
2. That the Executive be advised to note the information relating to the Fostering Service Annual Inspection Report.
3. That the Executive be requested to consider publicising the successes of the Family Placement Service.

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

The Permanence Team Manager presented a report outlining the activity of Middlesbrough's Family Placement Panel during the period 1 October to 31 March 2005.

Background information was provided on the establishment and role of the Panel which had met on eleven occasions during the period under consideration. Statistical information on the cases considered by the Panel during this six month period was set out in paragraph 7 of the report.

It was noted that the matters considered at the fortnightly Panel meetings are often complex and at times the meetings can be lengthy and demanding. The papers for each meeting are sent out in advance and there is a need for them to be read thoroughly prior to the meeting in order for members to participate effectively.

It was reported that an inspection of the Fostering Service had been undertaken by the National Care Standards Commission in February 2005. As part of the process an inspector had

observed a meeting of the Panel and found that the Panel met all the required standards and was commended for several aspects of its practice.

During discussion concern was expressed that despite the efforts made by officers and members of the Panel, the current Councillor vacancy on the Panel had not been filled.

RECOMMENDED as follows:

1. That the information in the report be noted.
2. That the Executive be advised to note the information relating to the Family Placement Panel.

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 LOOKED AFTER EDUCATED WITHIN MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL'S COMPLEMENTARY EDUCATION SERVICE

The Team Manager, Education of Children Looked After Team, presented an exempt report to inform Members of progress relating to the education of Children Looked after within Middlesbrough's Complementary Education Service.

Background information was provided on the four centres for alternative education and the change in the remit of the Complementary Education Service. Services are now provided to complement the work being undertaken in mainstream schools with the ultimate aim of promoting and supporting the concept of inclusion.

Meetings were now held regularly at six weekly intervals involving the Team Manager for Education of Children Looked After and the Heads of the Centres. Children Looked After receiving any form of Complementary Education were discussed at these meetings and their progress tracked and monitored. These discussions also included Children Looked after from other local authorities.

A summary of progress for individual children looked after receiving complementary education was appended to the report.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

- There had been some successes this year as evidenced by information in the appendix.
- Some young people were not receiving education
- To organise a full time package of complementary education could take up to six months
- Schools have to accept a framework of responsibility
- Children looked after in complementary education were some of the most vulnerable young people

RECOMMENDED that the Executive be advised to note the issues relating to complementary education for Children Looked After.

TRAINING EVENT – PARENTING THE CHILD IN PUBLIC CARE

Details of a one day multi agency training event entitled 'Parenting the Child in Public Care' to be held at the Middlesbrough Teaching and Learning Centre on 21 September 2005 were circulated.

The event was to provide an overview of involvement with children and their families from the point of referral through to permanent placement and/or leaving care.

Members were asked to note that places were to be booked before 2 September 2005 by contacting Margaret Callaghan.

NOTED

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S BUREAU PROJECT – CORPORATE PARENTING – THEORY TO PRACTICE

With the consent of the Chair details of a further training and consultancy offer from the National Children's Bureau was circulated. The proposal was for a two hour session for elected Members and senior managers with a second session for Members of the Corporate Parenting Board. It was agreed that the Children's Participation Officer would obtain further information.

NOTED

THE KELLY CUP

The Chair reported on her attendance at a regional football competition for children looked after that was held at Gateshead International Stadium. The Chair congratulated the young people from Middlesbrough who had participated – one young man won the Best Team Player Award - and the staff who had supported the event.

NOTED