

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**REGIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN
& YOUNG PEOPLE LOOKED AFTER**

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8TH SEPTEMBER 2005

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To present to Members information about recent developments in regional activities for children and young people looked after by local authorities.

BACKGROUND AND EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

2. In recent years there has been a growing interest in developing links between children and young people looked after by local authorities in the North East region. These links were initiated by Government Office North East and supported by a regional practitioner's group made up of children's rights, participation and involvement workers. The overall objectives are to strengthen the voice of children and young people looked after at a regional level; to enable children and young people to identify issues of common concern; and to enable children and young people to influence decision-making more effectively.

3. Regional activities have previously taken place in relation to consultation on Advocacy Standards and two Education Protects conferences. More recently, a five-a-side football competition and an arts festival were organised. In addition, it is hoped to undertake involvement activities in relation to the development of regional commissioning processes for specialised and complex needs placements.

KELLY CUP

4. The Newcastle-based Kelly Cup football competition has been in existence for about twenty years, offering an informal introduction to sports competition for young people. The Kelly Cup was named after a former member of staff and consists of a five-a-side competition for children in care. Experience of this competition has demonstrated many positive outcomes for children including improved confidence and self-esteem, a sense of purpose and common aspirations, improved behaviour and a positive sense of involvement.
5. As part of the development of regional working, it was decided to open this competition up to children from across the region. Fourteen children and young people from Middlesbrough took part in the Kelly Cup on 16th July 2005 and one of our young people was given an award for being the 'Best Team Player'. In the run up to the competition, five coaching sessions were provided by the Middlesbrough Football Community Project at the Eston Academy. In addition, pitch space was made available at the Southlands Centre to enable the activity to continue through the summer period, albeit with coaching and support provided by volunteers. Staff from the Family Placement Service, the Children Looked After Social Work Team and the Leaving Care Service supported the young people.
6. A regional forum has been set up to consider the development of a regional 'Looked After League'. This forum includes representatives from the regional Football Association, Government Office North-East, Sport and Leisure Services and Children's Services from across the region. It has been proposed and agreed that a number of regional looked after invitation football festivals will be held during the next 12 months as a pilot of the regional league. There would be 5 age-bands (based on the FA banding structure) for applicants to enter teams into:
 - Under 10's
 - Under 12's (10 and 11 year-olds)
 - Under 14's (12 and 13 year-olds)
 - Under 16's (14 and 15 year olds)
 - 16-plus young people

7. Each event would be for up to 200 children and young people. The location would be one where a number of pitches for short-sided games could be made available. The timetable of regional festivals would be as follows:
- 1st Festival: Newcastle area September or October 2005
 - 2nd Festival: Northumberland area February 2006 (indoors?)
 - 3rd Festival: Sunderland / Durham area April 2006
 - 4th Festival: Tees Valley area early July 2006
- To link with the regional arts festival, the football festivals will be named 'Ignite Football'.

IGNITE NE05

8. In June 2004, a conference on the pilot projects set up to develop Multi-Agency Looked After Partnerships (MALAPs) was held in the Baltic Arts Centre in Gateshead. This conference was used as an opportunity to show some artwork and watch performances by children looked after. Following the conference, a regional Culture, Arts and Creativity Forum was set up to promote the participation of children and young people in such activities. The work of this Forum led to the organisation of 'Ignite NE05'.
9. 'Ignite NE05' was a regional arts festival for children looked after, held at the Sage in Gateshead on 22nd August 2005. The event brought together an exhibition of artwork produced by children looked after from most of the local authorities in the north-east. In addition to the exhibition, a rolling programme of workshops was held during the day. These included Film Making, Creative Writing, Music Production, Visual Arts and Storytelling. There was also an opportunity for children and young people to perform in the Sage's small hall – mainly singing and dancing. The event concluded with a review of the day's activities and the viewing of a documentary film explaining how some local authorities (including Middlesbrough) had prepared for the festival. Thirty-four children and young people from Middlesbrough contributed to the exhibition and approximately 400 children, young people, carers, staff and elected Members from throughout the region attended the event.
10. Each participating authority received a glass paperweight to commemorate the event and this is to be kept in the display cabinets in the Town Hall. The Middlesbrough element of the exhibition is also to be displayed in a number of locations within the town.
11. As outlined in a recent publication by the National Children's Bureau (2004),
"There is a significant body of research demonstrating involvement in play and the creative arts is a potent way of increasing looked after children's emotional literacy and resilience, providing a range of opportunities which can promote self-confidence, self-esteem and social interaction and enhance their personal coping skills."
In recognition of these benefits, the intention is to continue with regional, arts-based activities on an annual basis although the precise format is yet to be decided.

THE NORTH EAST REGIONAL COMMISSIONING UNIT

(Children & Young People in specialist and complex needs placements)

12. This unit is the result of a partnership between Local Authorities within the North East region and Government Office North East to fund a Regional Commissioning Unit for out of area placements for children with specialised and complex needs. The aim of the unit is to bring additional efficiency, value and capacity across the North East region. The Unit is funded for 2 years and will be hosted by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Children, Education & Social Care Department.
13. The unit has only just been established but it is a clear intention of the steering group to involve children and young people in considering issues relevant to specialised and complex needs placements. Further work will be required by the unit to establish how this might be achieved.

OPTION APPRAISAL/RISK ASSESSMENT

14. The development of regional activities for children and young people looked after by local authorities has acted as a catalyst for activity in many authorities throughout the region. This has included providing a focus for existing activities and prompting the development of new activities. These initiatives have also raised awareness among services such as Culture, Sport and Leisure of the role they can play in enabling local authorities to fulfil their corporate parenting responsibilities.
15. Whilst local authorities are not required to take part in regional activities, there are clear benefits for children and young people in being able to participate both locally and with other children from across the region. In addition, the opportunities for sharing knowledge and experience with other services will assist all services of the local authority to prepare more effectively for the introduction of Joint Area Reviews (JARs). The JAR will inspect all services, *universal and targeted*, in a specific geographic area and a key focus of the inspection is provision for vulnerable children, including children looked after.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

16. There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report, although funding is required to enable young people to participate effectively. Some arts-based activities have been funded by 'Art & That', an independent group set up by care leavers, which applied for grant funding to do some film making. The pre-competition football coaching was provided free of charge by the Middlesbrough Football Community Project. Middlesbrough Sport and Leisure Services provided pitch space at the Southlands Centre free of charge and coaching for these sessions was undertaken by volunteers. The

cost of other support (transport, staffing etc.) was absorbed within mainstream funding.

LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

17. There are no legal implications arising from the report. As a regional activity, this information will be of interest to all Members.

RECOMMENDATIONS

18. That the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to:
- a). note recent developments in regional activity for children and young people looked after.
 - b). encourage active participation by relevant services in regional activity for looked after children and young people.

REASONS

19. The recommendation is supported by the following reasons:
- a). The local authority is required to promote the intellectual, emotional and social development of the children and young people it looks after. Involvement in regional activity provides unique opportunities to fulfil this responsibility.
 - b). The involvement and support of all relevant services within the Council is essential both in contributing to the success of regional activities and to ensure positive outcomes in future Joint Area Reviews.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- “Issues to be considered when setting up culture, arts and creativity programmes for looked after children.” National Children’s Bureau, November 2004

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