

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD  
10<sup>th</sup> November 2005**

**MIDDLESBROUGH FAMILY PLACEMENT PANEL –  
ACTIVITY REPORT FOR APRIL TO  
SEPTEMBER 2005**

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**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 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 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 1<sup>st</sup> APRIL TO 30<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2005**

6. The Family Placement Panel met on 11 occasions between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 30<sup>th</sup> September 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 panel meetings held	11
Number of adopters approved	10
Number of children whose adoption plans were approved	8
Number of children who were matched with adoptive parents	7
Number of foster carers approved	3
Number of foster carers who were de-registered	6
Number of children whose long-term fostering plans were approved	4
Number of children who were matched with long-term foster carers	14
Number of foster carer reviews that were considered	28
Number of reports presented for approval of a change of plan for a child	3
Total numbers of items considered	83

8. It will be noted that 6 foster carers were de-registered during this period. The reasons for these de-registrations are as follows:

- ◆ Retired from employment and fostering and moved to another part of the country.
- ◆ De-registered due to concerns over the standard of care provided.
- ◆ Resigned as both partners now work full-time and are no longer able to foster.
- ◆ Resigned due to illness of a close family member.
- ◆ Retired from fostering (aged 69)
- ◆ Mutual agreement, following the end of a long-term placement, that fostering was no longer appropriate.

9. For comparison purposes, the items considered by the Panel in previous 6 –monthly periods are as follows:

	Apr 04 to Sept 04	Oct 04 to Mar 05
Number of panel meetings held	13	11
Number of adopters approved	4	8
Number of reports presented for approval of a change of approval category for adopters	2	0
Number of children whose adoption plans were approved	11	9
Number of children who were matched with adoptive parents	13	9
Number of foster carers approved	2	0
Number of reports presented for approval of a change of registration category for foster carers	0	1
Number of foster carers who were de-registered	3	5
Number of children whose long-term fostering plans were approved	3	3
Number of children who were matched with long-term foster carers	7	8
Number of foster carer reviews that were considered	40	37
Number of reports presented for approval of a change of plan for a child	8	10
Number of reports presented for consultation on a specific issue	1	0
Total numbers of items considered	96	90

10. It will be noted that the number of new foster carers approved during the last 18 months has been low. The recruitment of foster carers is a national problem however there are specific issues in Middlesbrough, some of which

are related to our payments structure. A working party is currently considering the issue and possible solutions and will report in the near future.

11. As from 30<sup>th</sup> December 2005 the Adoption and Children Act 2002 will come into force and this will have several implications for the Family Placement Panel. Training will be provided for Panel members prior to the implementation of the new legislation.

## **OPTION APPRAISAL**

12. Not applicable to this piece of work.

## **FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS**

13. 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**

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

## **REASONS**

15. 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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