

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A formal notice had been issued to all concerned of a meeting of Corporate Parenting Board to be held on 27 April 2006. At the appointed time of 4.30 p.m. the following were present: -

PRESENT: Councillor Brunton (Chair) and Councillor A E Ward

OFFICIALS: J Cooke, D Johnson, S Little, I Nicholls, S Robinson.

PRESENT BY INVITATION: B Simpson (Foster Carer)
T Tolmie

****APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Brady, McIntrye, B Taylor, J Taylor, Mrs B Thompson and P Thompson.

It was confirmed that the quorum for meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board was three Members.

The Council's Constitution (Part 4, paragraph 6) states that if after a period of five minutes there is still not a quorum, the meeting will adjourn immediately. Remaining business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the Chair. However, due to the nature of the business, those present agreed to proceed on an informal basis. Any recommendations tabled would be confirmed at the next meeting.

****DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

No Declarations of Interest were made at this point in the meeting.

****MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 2 March 2006 were approved as a true record.

EVERY CHILD MATTERS – WHAT NEXT?

This Agenda Item was postponed until the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.

REVIEW OF FEES AND ALLOWANCES

The Service Manager, Children Looked After presented a report to inform Members of the allowances which would be payable to Foster Carers from 8 April 2006.

Background information provided details of the Banded Payments Scheme for foster carers that had been in operation since January 2000. Since the scheme had been implemented, payments had been reviewed annually and in most years Band A payments had been increased in line with inflation. In 2003 grant funding had meant that the Band A allowances had been increased by 10%.

The Board was advised that due to the lack of additional funding and continued budgetary pressures within the Council, the increase for 2006/2007 would be 2% which was in line with inflation and consistent with the Council's overall financial strategy. The increase would apply to Band A allowances only, other payments had not been increased. Appendix 1 of the report provided details of the rates of allowances to be paid for 2006/2007.

It was noted that the allowances paid to foster carers by Middlesbrough compared unfavourably to those paid by other agencies in the region and this was impacting on recruitment. Information was also provided on a piece of work that was currently being undertaken with Band B and C carers to develop a strategy on payments. Changes to the current scheme were being considered and a number of different options were being assessed.

Discussion ensued and it was stated that the payments for Band B and C carers had not increased for 6 years. It was felt that progress had not been made since the previous year and there would be difficulties with recruitment and retention. Some concerns were raised with respect to specific aspects of the service, which would be addressed by the relevant managers. The loyalty of Middlesbrough foster carers was particularly noted.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Executive be advised to note the content of the report.

CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE, CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER TEAM EVALUATION

The Deputy Director of Children Families and Learning presented a report to inform Members of the outcome of an evaluation of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Children Looked After Team and the actions arising from this.

It was stated that the CAMHS Children Looked After Service had been established in January 2004 and was funded by the CAMHS Grant on a South Tees basis. The service had been set up following a 'needs analysis' undertaken in 2003 in response to the increasing complexity of emotional and behavioural needs of Children Looked After and long waiting lists for CAMHS.

The service had been reviewed in December 2005 taking into account the referral process, interventions, caseload analysis, waiting lists and the views of referring agencies. Overall, the results of the evaluation were considered extremely positive. It was reported that the service's proactive approach was particularly valued.

Some areas where there was scope for development had been identified, particularly with data collection and analysis. The recommendations for future actions would be the basis of a joint action plan to be developed and agreed by Middlesbrough Council, Redcar and Cleveland Council and CAMHS. It was noted that although the CAMHS grant had not increased, the commitment to providing services to Children Looked After would be maintained.

In response to a query, it was confirmed that waiting times for children looked after had been reduced to a maximum of eight weeks. It was also noted that training for foster carers provided by CAMHS was considered very good, as was their 'open door' policy.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Executive be advised to note the report and its positive findings in relation to CAMHS services.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

ORDERED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

CHILDREN MISSING FROM PLACEMENT REPORT

The Service Manager, Children Looked After, submitted a report to provide Members with information relating to children who had been missing from placement in Middlesbrough between September 2005 and March 2006.

Background information on the risk assessment process relating to children missing from placement and the local procedures for responding to these situations was provided. It was noted that the Local Safeguarding Children Board had recently ratified the procedures.

The report provided information regarding Children Looked After who had gone missing from foster care provision and residential care.

Information regarding children missing from placement was monitored and reported through various forums including Middlesbrough Council and Five Rivers Partnership Board, Children Look After Planning and Implementation Group and in the Executive Member's Report to Council. It was reported that concerns had been raised regarding the Police's response to Children Missing from Placement and these were being addressed.

In response to a query it was confirmed that the Police were not able to return children aged over 16 to their placement if they were unwilling. However, the Children Looked After Team would take action to rectify the situation.

RECOMMENDED:

1. That the Executive be advised to note the issues in relation to children looked after missing from placement.
2. That the Executive be advised to endorse the actions taken by Officers to develop and implement the joint protocol.