

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**  
**13<sup>th</sup> July 2006**

**MEMBERSHIP OF MIDDLESBROUGH  
FAMILY PLACEMENT PANEL**

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

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

**TERRY REDMAYNE - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF  
CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LEARNING**

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**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Corporate Parenting Board of the membership of Middlesbrough Family Placement Panel and seek confirmation and approval of the membership.

**BACKGROUND**

2. Middlesbrough Council's Children Families and Learning Department has established a Family Placement Panel which meets every 2 weeks to discuss reports and make recommendations about applications to adopt and foster, plans to place children for adoption and long-term foster care and other matters relating to adoption and fostering. In order to operate, the Panel has to meet the legal requirements in relation to both fostering and adoption.

3. On Dec 30<sup>th</sup> 2005, the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 came into force as part of the implementation of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. These new regulations had many implications for the structure and work of the Family Placement Panel.

4. The Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 require that:

- (a) An adoption agency establishes at least one Adoption Panel consisting of no more than 10 members.
- (b) The chair of the Panel must be a person with the appropriate skills and experience who is independent of the adoption agency.
- (c) The panel also has to include:
  - (i) 2 social workers with at least 3 years post-qualifying experience
  - (ii) one elected member of the local authority
  - (iii) the agency's medical adviser
  - (iv) at least 3 other people who are independent of the adoption agency and, where reasonably practical, at least 2 people with personal experience of adoption.
- (d) The adoption agency has to appoint one member as Vice Chair, who will act as the Panel's chair when the Chair is absent or the role is vacant.
- (e) The Panel is only quorate for adoption matters when at least 5 members are present and this must include the Chair or Vice Chair, one of the social workers and one independent member.
- (f) Panel members can hold office for a term not exceeding 3 years and may not hold office for more than 3 consecutive terms. However this does not apply to the Medical Adviser who remains a panel member for as long as he or she is the agency medical adviser.

5. The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 require that:

- (a) a fostering service provider establishes at least one Fostering Panel consisting of no more than 10 members.

- (b) The chair of the Panel must be an independent person with the appropriate skills and experience or a senior member of staff of the fostering service.
  - (c) The panel also has to include:
    - (i) 2 social workers employed by the fostering service provider, one with childcare expertise and one with expertise in the provision of a fostering service.
    - (ii) At least one elected member of the authority
    - (iii) At least 4 other independent members, including at least one person who is, or within the previous 2 years has been, a foster parent for another fostering service provider.
  - (d) The fostering service has to appoint one member as Vice Chair, who will act as the Panel's chair when the Chair is absent or the role is vacant.
  - (e) The Panel is only quorate for fostering matters when at least 5 members are present, and this must include the Chair or Vice chair, one of the social workers and 2 of the independent members.
  - (f) Panel members can hold office for a term not exceeding 3 years and may not hold office for more than 2 consecutive terms.
6. The Panel meets fortnightly for half a day and is serviced by officers from the Legal Department, the Members Office and the Family Placement Service.

### **The implementation of the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005**

7. It will be seen that there are slightly different requirements made of Panel under the 2 different sets of regulations. As part of the implementation of the Adoption & Children Act, it was necessary to check that Middlesbrough's Family Placement Panel could meet all the necessary requirements. Officers from the Legal Department and the Family Placement Service are satisfied that it does and hence the panel can continue to consider reports relating to both adoption and fostering. Details of the current membership are given in Appendix 1.

8. The items considered at panel meetings are:
  - (a) applications from prospective adopters
  - (b) plans for children to be placed for adoption
  - (c) proposals to place a specific child or children for adoption by particular prospective adopters
  - (d) reviews of the approval of prospective adopters
  - (e) applications from prospective foster carers
  - (f) reviews of the approval of foster carers
  - (g) plans for children to be placed in long-term foster care
  - (h) proposals to place a specific child or children in a long-term foster placement with particular foster carers.
  - (i) termination of the approval of foster carers.
  
9. Other actions which were taken as part of the implementation of the new regulations were:
  - (a) The recruitment of an Independent Chair of Family Placement Panel.
  - (b) The recruitment of 2 new independent members of panel.
  - (c) The introduction of annual reviews of the performance of panel members.
  - (d) A total revision of the Family Placement Panel procedures.
  - (e) A total revision of the membership agreement for panel members.
  - (f) The provision of training in the new legislation for panel members.

#### **OPTION APPRAISAL**

10. Not applicable to this piece of work.

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

11. 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**

12. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to approve the membership of Middlesbrough Family Placement Panel as outlined in Appendix 1.

## **REASONS**

13. This recommendation is supported by the following reasons:
  - (a) Each Local Authority which acts as an adoption agency and provides a fostering service must establish a panel which meets the requirements of the regulations.
  - (b) The composition of the panel is prescribed by the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

- (a) the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005
- (b) the Adoption and Children Act 2002 Guidance
- (c) the Fostering Services Regulations 2002

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**Family Placement Panel Membership as at July 2006**

Name	Status	Appointed	Until	Experience
Rose Wilson	Independent Chair	Dec 2005	Dec 2008	Independent social worker
Dr Phyu	Medical Adviser	Dec 2005	N/A	Consultant Community Paediatrician
Cllr Jan Brunton	Elected member	Dec 2005	Dec 2008	Executive Member for Children's Services
Sandie Dixon	Agency Social Worker	Dec 2005	Aug 2008	Family Support Team Manager
Julia Landin	Agency Social Worker	Dec 2005	Dec 2008	Quality Assurance and Reviewing Officer
Helen Little	Independent person	Dec 2005	Jan 2007	Foster carer for independent agency
David Sands (Vice Chair)	Independent person	Dec 2005	Mar 2007	Assistant Head of Pupil Support Education
Brenda Hall	Independent person	Dec 2005	Dec 2008	Team Manager, Children's Society
Penny Vickers	Independent person	June 2006	June 2009	Has experience of adoption
Sue Lax	Independent person	July 2006	July 2009	Foster carer support worker