

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on 7 September 2006

PRESENT: Councillor Brunton (Chair), Councillors B Thompson, P Thompson and A E Ward

OFFICIALS: J Cooke, K Curran, V Flynn, S Little, D Waites and J Wilson

PRESENT AS OBSERVERS: B Simpson (Foster Carer)

****APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Davison, McPartland and J Taylor

****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 8 June 2006 were approved as a true record.

FOSTERING SERVICE – STATEMENT OF PURPOSE & CHILDREN’S GUIDE

A report was presented, the purpose of which was to inform the Board of the updated versions of the Statement of Purpose of Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service for the year 2006-2007 and the Children’s Guide to Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service for the year 2006-2006. These were attached to the report, as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services came into force in April 2002 and were part of the government’s commitment to improving protection for children and raising standards within this service area. These regulations, along with National Minimum Standards, were regulated by the Commission for Social Care Inspection, an independent body. One of the requirements of the Regulations and National Minimum Standards, was that a Statement of Purpose should be produced, along with a Children’s Guide to the Fostering Service.

These two documents were now being presented to the Board, for the fourth Annual Review. Details of revised staffing arrangements were included and the main points to note were as follows:-

Statement of Purpose – 2006-07

- Principles – which were child focussed, partnership and anti-discriminatory
- Aims and objectives
- Standards of Care
- Management Structure
- Details of staff as at 1 June 2006
- Number of foster carers – at 31 March 2006, there were 100 foster carers
- Number of children placed – at 31 March 2006, there were 143 children placed in foster care
- Numbers of complaints and their outcomes – there was only one complaint and this was on-going.
- Service and facilities provided by the Fostering Service details
- Procedures and processes used by Middlesbrough Council’s Fostering Service, including
 - Recruitment, Assessment and approval
 - Support, training and review.

Children’s Guide

- Statement of purpose
- People – Who’s who in the fostering service

- Being 'looked after'
- Being fostered
- Who are the foster carers?
- Procedures for recruiting foster carers
- Support, training and review
- Making a complaint, problem solving, investigation and review.

In a general summary, it was reported that there had been one member of staff on long-term sick leave and other staff were 'acting up' to cover her post. A peer mentoring scheme, provided by foster carers who had relevant training, was now up and running, offering peer support. Recruitment of new foster carers had been slow in the previous year. Due to the lack of assessors, there had been no opportunity for carers to achieve NVQ Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. Officers were looking and other opportunities and costing alternative courses and packages to see if they were appropriate.

RECOMMENDED as follows:-

- (a) that the Executive be advised to formally approve the Statement of Purpose and the Children's Guide for 2006-2007
- (b) that the next annual review of these documents should take place in April 2007 or as soon as possible thereafter.

ANNUAL REPORT – 2005-06 – FOSTERING SERVICE

The Fostering Team manager presented a report, the purpose of which was to present to the Board with the Annual Report of the Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service for the year 2005-06, which was attached as Appendix 1 of the report.

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 2005/06, activity and developments during 2005/06 and developments and issues for 2006/07.

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. Sections 5, 6 and 7 of the Annual Report contained information which did not appear in the Statement of Purpose.

Reference was made to the staffing levels within the Fostering Service and it was agreed that the section needed to be fully staffed. Reference was also made to the Council's Diversity Team and whether fostering was ever presented as an option for those in an ethnic minority. The Board was assured that the Team Manager worked closely with the Diversity Unit and that the issue of fostering an adoption would be raised as appropriate. It was noted that the Sahara Project taps into the community and links were developing. It was also noted that the minimum age for fostering was 21 years of age but that the upper limit was unspecified and depended in individual circumstances.

The Board was also advised that recruitment was always and challenge, however, placing information on the web site had generated a lot of interest.

RECOMMENDED as follows:-

- (a) that the contents of the report be noted.
- (b) that the Executive be advised to note the information relating to the Fostering Service Annual Report..

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL ADOPTION SERVICE – STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND CHILDREN’S GUIDE – 2006/07

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

- (a) The Statement of Purpose of Middlesbrough Council’s Adoption Service for 2006/07.
- (b) The Children’s Guide to Middlesbrough Council’s Adoption Service for 2006/07.

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:

- (a) that the Executive be advised to formally approve the Statement of Purpose and the Children’s Guide for 2006/07.
- (b) that the next annual review of these documents should take place in April 2007 or as soon as possible thereafter.

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL ADOPTION SERVICE – ANNUAL REPORT 2005/06

The Permanence Team Manager presented the Board with the Annual Report of Middlesbrough Council’s Adoption Service for 2005/06, which was similar to the Annual Report on Fostering.

The Annual Report was attached to the report at Appendix 1 and provided details of the principles, aims, objectives and functions of the Adoption Service, the services and facilities provided, staffing during 2005/06, activity and developments during 2005/06 and developments and issues for 2006/07.

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. Sections 5, 6 and 7 of the Annual Report contained information, which did not appear in the Statement of Purpose.

The Board was advised that the Adoption Service was particularly looking for parents willing to adopt children over the age of two years.

The Chair thanked the officer and requested that the thanks of the Board be recorded, to all concerned in the joint effort undertaken by the Adoption Service.

RECOMMENDED as follows:

- (a) that the information presented be noted.
- (b) that the Executive be advised to note the information relating to the Adoption Service Annual Report.

- (c) that the thanks of the Corporate Parenting Board be recorded, to all concerned in the Adoption Service.

****EXCLUSION – PRESS – PUBLIC**

ORDERED that, in accordance with Section 100A Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972, 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 Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

CHILDREN MISSING FROM PLACEMENT – UPDATE REPORT

The Service Manager from Children Families and Learning presented a report, the purpose of which was to advise the Board of information relating to children who had been missing from placement, in Middlesbrough, between March and August 2006.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank the Service Manager, who was about to retire, for her sterling work for children and young people in Middlesbrough.

Discussion took place as to what qualified as an 'absence', whether those in care homes had to sign in and out, whether staff had to be informed of any absences, what was the national criteria, how the local authority kept track of children within its care and what levels of Risk Assessment were required. All this had to be balanced with the needs of the children, however, given the potential a serious loss could incur, it was deemed essential that any absence be reported and addressed upon the return of the child.

RECOMMENDED as follows:

- (a) that the information presented be noted.
- (b) that the Executive be advised to note the information relating to the Update Report on Children Missing from Placement.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items to report under Any Other Business.