

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on 12 October 2006.

PRESENT: Councillor J Brunton (Chair), Councillors McPartland, B Thompson and P Thompson.

OFFICIALS: J Cooke, D Johnson, C Kendrick, S Little, I Nicholls and J Wilson.

PRESENT BY INVITATION: C Nugent (Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust).

PRESENT AS AN OBSERVER: B Simpson (Foster Carer).

****APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors J Jones and A E Ward.

****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 7 September 2006 were approved as a true record.

BE HEALTHY - UPDATE

The representative from Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust presented a report to update Members on the promotion of health for children looked after. This followed on from the 'Be Healthy' presentation, given to the Board in December 2005.

It was stated that promoting the mental and physical health and emotional well being of children looked after was a priority for Middlesbrough. This was felt to be essential to ensuring looked after children and young people achieved the five outcomes set for all children, as part of the government's Every Child Matters programme.

Physically Healthy

Members were informed that all those involved in the care of children looked after in Middlesbrough actively promoted self care skills in relation to personal hygiene, diet, exercise and sexual health.

It was recognised that foster carers had an particularly important role in this and further support and training was being developed for them. In addition to the four formal training sessions offered to Foster Carers each year, a range of agencies would offer health advice and practical support. This would supplement the information in the Foster Carers' Handbook and provide advice on what to do when confronted with particular situations. An informal Drop In Session was also being developed, where foster carers would be able to visit local venues to share their concerns and experiences. It was hoped that this would become a regular event, however, this was dependent on funding being available.

Sexually Healthy

It was reported that the 'C Card' Scheme, which enabled direct access to advice and free condoms continued to be used by young people.

Information and statistics regarding the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases were circulated at the meeting and it was noted that the number of cases of chlamydia diagnosed continued to rise. Reference was made to a website with information for young people and packs that enabled individuals to be tested without attending health care venues. In response to a query, it was indicated that young people were often reluctant to discuss sexual health issues until trust and confidence had been established. Members were advised that a pack to deliver

information to young people who did not attend school was also being developed in partnership with the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Co-ordinator.

It was confirmed that the 'C Card' scheme was available to all looked after young people through their health reassessments and there were no barriers to their participation. It was also stated that the 'C Card' Scheme included relationship and self-esteem training.

Healthy Lifestyles

Reference was made to the Individual Health Plans produced for each child, following their health assessments. With the young person's agreement, health plans were shared with the professionals involved. This system ensured that children and young people received the health care they required.

Mentally and Emotionally Healthy

It was stated that looked after children and young people had a high rate of mental health problems. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service provided support for children looked after, however it was noted that the provision was currently under review.

Chose not to take illegal drugs

It was reported that there was a requirement that all children looked after aged 8 to 18 years be screened for alcohol and drug misuse issues. In Middlesbrough, this took place as part of annual health reassessments and involved discussion rather than testing. All staff involved had received training on recognition and referral options from Eclipse. This ensured that problems were identified at the earliest possible stage and appropriate interventions could be put in place to prevent issues escalating.

It was also noted that some young people had requested advice and support for smoking cessation, which was considered to be extremely positive.

Healthy Care Standards and Healthy Care Programme

Information was provided on the National Healthy Care Standard and Healthy Care Programme. These had been developed from the five Every Child Matters outcomes and involved all agencies involved in the health of Children Looked After. It was acknowledged that whilst adopting the Standards and participating in the Programme was a demanding piece of work, it would be beneficial in the long term.

There was an opportunity for discussion and it was noted that sports coaching had been provided for children looked after as part of a programme of events. It was considered important that children were able to access the Council's sport and leisure facilities and their participation was supported and encouraged. It was also noted that the issues discussed were relevant to all children; however, children looked after were more susceptible to health problems.

RECOMMENDED that the Executive be advised to continue implementing the Healthy Care Standards and Programme.

SUMMARY OF ROTA VISITS AND REGULATION 33 REPORTS

The Assistant Director of Children, Families and Learning presented a report to inform Members of the outcomes of Regulation 33 and Rota Visits to the Gleneagles Resource Centre and the residential homes managed by Five Rivers.

It was explained that a range of managers completed Regulation 33 visits at the Gleneagles Resource Centre, whereas two independent social workers visited the homes managed by Five Rivers. Visits were completed each month and a report was submitted. Any necessary actions were then noted and undertaken.

Examples of comments made following Regulation 33 Visits to homes managed by Five Rivers were included in the report. It was indicated that whilst most comments were of practical nature, some were qualitative and recorded young people's views. Overall, the reports had been very positive.

The Gleneagles Resource Centre had had Regulation 33 visitors from a wide range of backgrounds. Visitors had observed interaction with young people and received feedback from parents. Reports on the Centre had invariably been positive.

It had been intended that Rota Visits would link with Regulation 33 Visits; however, this had not been accomplished and Rota Visits had been irregular. Members recognised that undertaking Rota Visits was an important part of corporate parenting and expressed concern that the visits were not taking place.

RECOMMENDED that as follows:

1. That the Executive be advised to note the information relating to Rota Visits and Regulation 33 Reports.
2. That the Executive be advised to ask officers to undertake a review of the process for Rota Visits with a view to introducing a revised system from June 2007.

GREEN PAPER ON LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The Assistant Director of Children, Families and Learning gave a verbal update on the Green Paper 'Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care', published on 9 October 2006. Copies of a briefing note produced by the Local Government Association were circulated at the meeting. A further report would be submitted to the Board in due course.

A summary of the Green Paper's content was given and key issues were highlighted. It was noted that the Green Paper emphasised the importance of the role of corporate parents and its tone was very positive for Children Looked After. Information was provided under the following headings:

- The Need for Reform
- Children on the Edge of Care
- The Role of the Corporate Parent
- Ensuring Children are in the Right Placements
- A First Class Education
- Life Outside School
- The Transition to Adult Life

Members were informed that consultation on the Green Paper would be undertaken within the Council in the near future.

NOTED