

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on 21 June 2007.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs B Thompson (Chair), Councillor Brunton, P Rogers, and P Thompson.

OFFICIALS: J Cooke, M Cooper, C Kendrick, S Little, D Sands.

PRESENT AS OBSERVERS: B SIMPSON (FOSTER CARER
T Tolmie (former Care Leaver)

PRESENT BY INVITATION:

MARK NICHOLSON (FOSTER CARER – NATIONAL CHILDREN'S HOMES)
Three children and young people.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous meetings held on 15 February 2007 and 29 March 2007 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

CORPORATE PARENTING – AN OVERVIEW – PRESENTATION

The Deputy Director of Children, Families and Learning gave a presentation to provide an overview of corporate parenting.

It was stated that local authorities had a collective responsibility to safeguard Children Looked After and promote their life chances. Local Authorities' responsibilities included ensuring Children Looked After were the primary focus for resources, providing a fully rounded set of support and care services, and supporting children moving into independence. In practice, this meant keeping children safe and healthy, ensuring they lived with people who cared about them, providing them with opportunities to grow and learn, making sure they had decent homes as they became independent and helping them to get on in the world.

Members were advised that children were defined as looked after when they had been in the care of the Local Authority, or accommodated by the Local Authority for a continuous period of more than 24 hours. This also included children looked after under a legal order or looked after under voluntary arrangements with their parents or carers.

It was noted that children became looked after for a range of reasons including neglect, emotional abuse, physical/sexual abuse. Although some care leavers did go on to be very successful a child's reduced 'life chances' could lead to poor levels of educational achievement which related to placement stability and emotional well-being. Educational achievements were usually higher when children remained in their own families.

Statistics illustrating the numbers and ages of Children Looked After in Middlesbrough as at 31 March 2007 were provided. It was noted that until 2003 there had been a steady increase in the number of Children Looked After in Middlesbrough but for the last four years this trend had reduced. However, Middlesbrough continues to have a higher number of children looked after per 10,000 population than other local authorities in the country. Of the 243 children currently looked after, the greatest proportion were aged between 10 and 15 years and the vast majority of Children Looked After were placed with foster carers. It was noted that very young children tended to move through the system more quickly than older children, as they were more likely to be adopted or placed with Family Network carers.

Information was then given on the Corporate Parenting Board which had been established in 2000 and currently functioned as an Executive Advisory Body. The Board's responsibilities included ensuring that the needs of Children Looked After were met, developing corporate responses to corporate parenting issues, raising awareness and listening to children. Rota visits were also made to local residential homes and the respite care facility to ascertain whether these homes were of an acceptable standard from the perspective of "if this were my child".

Members were informed that a White Paper "Care Matters: A Time for Change" had been published on the day of the meeting. The Deputy Director gave a brief overview of the provisions of the White Paper and mentioned that there was a report on the agenda proposing that Care Matters should form the basis for the Board's annual work programme for 2007/08.

Members considered it important that corporate parenting was uppermost in the minds of Councillors and senior managers and it was confirmed that there was an ongoing focus on this.

RECOMMENDED that the Executive be advised to note the information relating to Corporate Parenting.

PRESENTATION – EDUCATION DVD

The Team Manager for Education of Children Looked After and Children and Young People was in attendance to present a DVD which had been produced by children and young people looked after.

The Board was advised that a lot of young people had been involved with the making of the DVD which had taken a great deal of time, effort and hard work to produce. Three of the young people who had contributed to the interviews in the film were welcomed to the meeting. They would be happy to provide explanations and answer any questions.

The complete video lasted approximately 50/60 minutes and covered the young peoples' thoughts and comments on various education related topics. It was proposed to show Members selected snippets from the film from the sequences around why education was important and the role of the Designated Teacher.

Members were advised that in future it was proposed to use the film as a training tool for teachers and social workers. The film had already been shown at an educational conference where delegates had been moved by its impact and it had received great acclaim for its professionalism.

During the ensuing discussion the following comments were made:

- The film was really, really good and very moving.
- The hard work of the young people in making the film was acknowledged
- The film had a powerful message to put across.
- The film was tremendous and the Members were proud of everyone involved with its making.

RECOMMENDED that the Executive be advised to note the information in connection with the production of the film by children and young people looked after.

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – REPORT ON ACTIVITY – MAY 2006 – APRIL 2007

The Childrens' Participation Officer presented a report summarising the work undertaken by the Corporate Parenting Board during the year 2006/07.

Throughout the year the Corporate Parenting Board had maintained a focus on improving services for those children and young people looked after in the most cost effective way.

During this period Members had been provided with updates on the five outcomes of the Every Child Matters agenda. In addition various reports in relation to specific issues to comply with requirements under regulations and guidance had been considered. A number of

recommendations had been made to the Executive, all of which were accepted and had been implemented.

Detailed information regarding the Board's activity during this period was attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

The Chair thanked Councillor Brunton for her commitment to her role as the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board in 2006/07 together with officers for their hard work during the year which had made a great difference to the lives of children looked after through various initiatives such as leisure cards, youth service and allocation of housing for 18-20 year olds etc.

RECOMMENDED

That the Executive be advised to note the summary of the work undertaken by the Corporate Parenting Board during the year 2006/2007.

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – WORK PROGRAMME 2007/2008

A report was submitted to advise Members of the proposed work programme for the Corporate Parenting Board for the year 2007/08.

It was proposed that during the forthcoming year the Board consider in greater detail the proposals contained within the recent Green Paper: Care Matters – Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care (October 2006). As previously mentioned, Members were informed that a White Paper, "Care Matters: A Time for Change" had been published on the day of the meeting. It was confirmed that Care Matters should form the basis for the Board's annual work programme.

In addition there are a number of regular reports that are submitted to the Board throughout the year to enable the authority to comply with Statutory Regulations and recommended good practice.

A copy of the Board's remit was attached as an appendix and the proposed work programme would ensure that the Board was clearly focussed on achieving the best possible outcomes for children looked after.

RECOMMENDED that the Executive be advised to note the proposed work programme for the Corporate Parenting Board for the year 2007/2008.

ANY OTHER MATTERS

The Chair wished to confirm that meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board for the remainder of the Municipal Year had been scheduled as follows:

Date:

2 August 2007

20 September 2007

8 November 2007

13 December 2007

31 January 2008

6 March 2008

17 April 2008

All meetings would be held on Thursdays at 4.30 pm and the Agendas and associated reports circulated as soon as possible prior to each meeting.

It was drawn to the attention of Members that this was the last meeting that the Deputy Director of Children Families and Learning would be attending as she was leaving the authority. Both the Chair and the Vice Chair wished to express their thanks, together with those of the Members, for Jenni's support and care and attention that she had given to the Corporate Parenting Board

during the last three years. The Board expressed good wishes for her future success in Darlington.

NOTED