

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

2nd August 2007

**MEMBERSHIP OF MIDDLESBROUGH
FAMILY PLACEMENT PANEL**

**BRENDA THOMPSON - EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR
CHILDREN FAMILIES & LEARNING**

**JAN DOUGLAS – INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LEARNING**

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. 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.

4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
 - (j) applications for approval as supported lodgings providers

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL

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 were satisfied that it did and this has since been confirmed by regulatory inspections of the Fostering Service and the Adoption Service which took place in October 2006.
8. Since the last report was presented to Corporate Parenting Board in July 2006, there have been 4 changes to the membership of the Panel which are as follows:
 - (a) In January 2007 an independent member came to the end of her term of office. She has been replaced by a new member who was recruited by means of an open recruitment process using an advertisement in the local press. This was the first time that this process had been used for recruitment of panel members and it was difficult to predict the response. Fortunately it proved to be very positive, with 18 requests for information packs and 4 subsequent applications. 2 applicants were shortlisted and interviewed and the successful candidate started her term of office in July 2007.
 - (b) In March 2007 a representative from the Pupil Support Service of Children Families & Learning came to the end of his term of office and will be replaced by another member of this section as soon as the appropriate clearances and induction processes have been completed.
 - (c) In May 2007 the elected member representative changed due to changes in the Executive of Middlesbrough Council.
 - (d) As the panel member referred to in (b) above was also Vice Chair of the Panel, another experienced panel member was appointed as Vice Chair in April 2007.
9. Details of the current membership of the Family Placement Panel, taking into account all the above changes, are given in Appendix 1.

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.

RECOMMENDATION

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. Each Local Authority that acts as an adoption agency and provides a fostering service must establish a panel which meets the requirements of the regulations. 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

-

AUTHOR: Judy Yelder, Family Placement Development Officer
TEL NO: 01642 - 201953

*Address: Middlesbrough Teaching & Learning Centre, Cargo Fleet Lane,
Middlesbrough, TS3 8PB*

Website: <http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk>

Appendix 1

Family Placement Panel Membership as at July 2007

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 Brenda Thompson	Elected member	June 2007	June 2010	Executive Member for Children's Services
Sandie Dixon	Agency Social Worker	Dec 2005	Aug 2008	Locality Team Manager
Julia Landin	Agency Social Worker	Dec 2005	Dec 2008	Quality Assurance and Reviewing Officer
Brenda Hall (Vice Chair)	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
Rose Marwood	Independent person	July 2007	July 2010	Registered Mental Health Nurse
John Smith	Independent person	August 2007 (subject to clearances)	August 2010	Assistant Head of Pupil Support