

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

**MIDDLESBROUGH FAMILY
PLACEMENT PANEL – ACTIVITY
REPORT FOR APRIL TO
SEPTEMBER 2007**

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

**GILL ROLLINGS – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LEARNING**

13th DECEMBER 2007

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the activity of Middlesbrough's Family Placement Panel during the period 1st April to 30th September 2007.

BACKGROUND

2. Each Local Authority which provides a fostering service and/or acts as an adoption agency is required to establish a panel consisting of social work practitioners experienced in adoption and family placement matters, elected Members and independent persons. The composition of the panel is prescribed by the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

3. Middlesbrough Council has established a Family Placement Panel which meets the legal requirements in relation to fostering and adoption and therefore can consider cases from both aspects of family placement work. The Panel plays a key role in promoting the welfare of vulnerable children in public care.
4. The Panel has 10 members and is serviced by officers from the Legal Department, Members Office and the Family Placement Service. It meets fortnightly for half a day.
5. The role of the Family Placement Panel is to consider whether:
 - (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

ACTIVITY FROM 1st APRIL TO 30th SEPTEMBER 2007

6. The Family Placement Panel met on 13 occasions during this period. The matters considered by the panel are often complex and at times meetings can be lengthy and demanding. Panel members receive the papers in advance of each meeting and need to read them thoroughly prior to the meeting in order to participate effectively in the discussion.
7. The number of items considered in each category during this 6 month period were as follows:

Number of adopters approved	8
Number of children whose adoption plans were approved	13
Number of children whose placements with adoptive parents were approved	9
Number of foster carers approved	1
Number of foster carers who were de-registered	4
Number of children whose long-term fostering plans were approved	3
Number of children whose placements with long-term foster carers were approved	3
Number of foster carer reviews that were considered	29
Number of reports presented for approval of a change of plan for a child	1
Number of reports presented for consultation or update on a specific issue	1
Total numbers of items considered	72

8. It will be noted that 4 foster carers were de-registered during this period. Three of these came about because the foster carers resigned following the end of a long-term placement and the fourth had been inactive for some time and had not responded to our attempts to contact them.
9. For comparison purposes, the table below shows items considered by the Panel over an 18 month period:

	Apr 06 to Sept 06	Oct 06 to Mar 07	Apr 07 to Sept 07
Number of panel meetings held	12	12	13
Number of adopters approved	5	5	8
Withdrawal of approved adopters	1	1	0

Number of children whose adoption plans were approved	17	4	13
Number of children whose placements with adoptive parents were approved	6	3	9
Number of foster carers approved	3	0	1
Number of foster carers who were approved for a change of registration	0	2	0
Number of foster carers who were de-registered	2	3	4
Number of children whose long-term fostering plans were approved	7	5	3
Number of children whose placements with long-term foster carers were approved	3	4	3
Number of foster carer reviews that were considered	34	39	29
Number of reports presented for approval of a change of plan for a child	2	1	1
Number of reports presented for consultation on a specific issue	0	1	0
Number of reports which were deferred due to concerns over the quality of the reports	1	3	0
Number of supported lodgings approved	1	0	0
Total numbers of items considered	83	71	72

10. It will be noted that the number of new foster carers approved during the last 18 months has been low. The recruitment of foster carers is a national problem however there are specific issues in Middlesbrough, some of which are related to our payments structure. Work is continuing within the Children, Families & Learning Department to try to address this issue as part of a general review of services to children looked after.

OPTION APPRAISAL

11. Not applicable to this piece of work.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

12. 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

13. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the information relating to the Family Placement Panel.

REASONS

14. This recommendation is supported by the following reasons:
 - (a) Standard 17.3 of the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services in England requires the executive side of the Council to receive written reports on the management and outcomes of the adoption service every 6 months.
 - (b) It is important that elected members are aware of the work of the Family Placement Panel in order that they can effectively fulfil their responsibilities as Corporate Parents to children looked after.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

- (a) the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003
- (b) National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services in England
- (c) the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005
- (d) the Fostering Services Regulations 2002
- (e) the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services

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