

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

6th MARCH 2008

**THE INVOLVEMENT OF SPORT AND LEISURE WITH
CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER**

**BARRY COPPINGER – EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY
SAFETY AND LEISURE**

IAN PARKER - DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To raise Member awareness of the activities delivered to Children Looked After, by the Sport & Leisure service in 2007/2008.
2. To outline further opportunities that may be developed to enable children looked after to access sport and physical activity opportunities.

BACKGROUND

3. Sport and Leisure Services sit in Community Protection within the Environment Department. The service delivers sport and physical activity opportunities to the people of Middlesbrough. The service comprises the following facilities:-

Rainbow Leisure Centre
The Neptune Centre
Clairville Stadium
Ormesby Sports Complex

Southlands Centre
Municipal Golf Centre
Acklam Sports Centre
Sports Development Team

4. Sport and Leisure is one of the few local authority services that operate in a commercial environment. Users must choose to engage with physical activity opportunities and then elect to use the service as opposed to those of private providers in the town.

5. The service carries significant income targets. This creates a need to balance social objectives with income generation. The service must continue to compete and to provide the quality and diversity of opportunity that customers have come to expect. Good service is recognised by both customers and external agencies, the service is a Charter Mark organisation and, along with the rest of Middlesbrough Council, holds Investors in People status.
6. The Sport and Leisure Service began to work closely with Children Looked after in 2005/2006. This began with a period of consultation that led to initial delivery of holiday activity programmes and some football coaching specifically for children looked after. Young people from the group were supported in applying for Big Lottery funding to enable delivery of these activities, further subsidy has been funded from the Sports Development budgets.
7. Holiday programmes have been developed in consultation with young people, giving a sense of ownership and choice. The activities such as the ropes courses and outdoor sports have challenged young people, extended their comfort zones and exposed them to opportunities they may otherwise not have experienced. They have gained confidence and established new relationships both within their peer groups and with adult leaders.
8. Membership cards that give access to free swimming sessions have been distributed to young people in care settings. These allow free access to any public swimming session, not just restricted time slots.
9. Specific holiday programmes are in addition to ongoing work the Sport and Leisure service does with Middlesbrough's schools. Any young people being looked after accessing these schools are able to participate in the activities on offer.

CAPACITY TO FURTHER DEVELOP WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE LOOKED AFTER

10. The service is keen to further support the corporate care of 'Children Looked After' through provision of, and participation in, sport and physical activities. The service is keen to establish programmes that will ultimately give young people looked after the skills and confidence to engage with the main stream sport and leisure provision. It is recognised that a lot of initial support is needed to reach this stage and simple removal of cost does not eradicate all barriers for these young people. Some activity options suggested in previous years were naive in this respect and the staffing support needed underestimated.
11. The service must remain mindful of the need to meet income and expenditure targets as well as support corporate objectives, thus any initiative must be appropriately funded, should not unduly displace or disadvantage other users and should not be detrimental to the overall service.

12. The following are suggested areas of work that may be developed to enable greater levels of participation by young people being looked after. At this stage ideas are still to be developed and final costs are not suggested. Booking and consent forms may be a requisite for many of the activities.

Community Sports Coach for Children Looked After

13. The service, in partnership with Tees Valley Sport (County Sports Partnership) has developed a bid for a dedicated sports officer OR Community Sports Coach, to work with Young People in Care. Funding to support the bid has been committed from Middlesbrough PCT with indicative funding from Sport England. However Sport England's changing priorities have prevented them from committing. The delay is now jeopardising the financial commitment from Middlesbrough PCT.
14. The Sports Officer would lead activity sessions with young people, establish holiday activity programmes and introduce them to sustainable community based sports activity such as sports clubs and ongoing opportunities at sport and leisure facilities. The support that this role would be able to give to young people would significantly raise the likelihood of sustained involvement in sport and physical activity. The role would add value to the range of free passes and reduced cost activity that the Sport and Leisure Service has been able to offer previously.
15. As well as the areas suggested above, the Sport and Leisure Service would seek to be responsive to client and customer need. The service will also seek to involve colleagues in Streetscene in terms of provision of activity in parks and countryside spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

16. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive:
 - a. that a programme of meaningful activities has been delivered in 2007 for Children Looked After. The holiday programmes were delivered through the year and passes for ongoing free swimming are made available to young people in care.
 - b. that the Executive will be updated when the funding package for the dedicated community sports coach is finalised and this role progresses.
 - c. that uptake of further opportunities would be beneficial and is possible, but will require funding if this is not to become a revenue budget pressure within the Sport and Leisure service.

REASON

17. The Council is responsible for ensuring that the best possible outcomes are achieved in relation to the health of Children Looked After by the local authority.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Corporate Parenting Board Report; “*The Current And Potential Involvement Of Middlesbrough Sport And Leisure With Children Looked After*”, 21 April 2005
- Corporate Parenting Board Report, “*The Involvement Of Sport And Leisure With Children Looked After*”, November 2006

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