

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

6TH MARCH 2008

**Youth Service Provision to Children
Looked After**

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PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Corporate Parenting Board of the work undertaken by the Youth Service to support Children Looked After.

BACKGROUND AND EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

2. Concerns were raised, via the Children Looked After Planning & Implementation Group (CLAG), about the capacity for Children Looked After to access Youth Service facilities. This was for a number of reasons. Many young people hadn't sustained friendships due to moving areas, schools and foster placements. Their confidence levels as a result of their backgrounds may be low and a barrier to seeking such provision.
3. The Ofsted report of the Youth Service in 2004 identified that the service was good at the work done with young people who came through the doors of the Youth Centres but did little to target groups of young people who might have additional needs. These groups included children looked after, young people with disabilities, BME groups and others.
4. It was identified at a CLAG meeting that some of the young people looked after had been involved with the Kelly Cup, a regional football event for looked after children, as previously reported to the Corporate Parenting Board (8/9/05). This activity had been supported by the Middlesbrough Football Community Project at the Eston

Academy on a time-limited basis. The young people wished to continue their involvement and needed a place to train and be coached and support with transport to football events. This led to the development of a partnership approach between the Children Looked After service, Middlesbrough Council's Sports Development team and the Youth Service.

ACTION TAKEN

5. Working together, the Sports Development team supplied football coaches to support the group and the Youth Service supplied the Manor Youth Centre's gym and other facilities at no cost, plus transport where necessary. The group met for 1 hour a week initially to support the football practice. This later developed into two hours as other children and young people looked after, who were not directly interested in playing football, came along to support their friends and to access other facilities in the centre. This provision started in November 2005 on a Tuesday evening between 5.00 - 7.00pm.
6. As young people came from across the town, difficulties arose with transport to and from the facility and to access activities elsewhere. The Youth Service Centre Manager worked with some young people to obtain funding for some summer activities and transport from the Big Boost Lottery fund. This was successful and the young people participated in a variety of activities raising their aspirations and confidence levels. Transport for the young people was provided by some foster carers, some staff and some use was made of local taxi companies.
7. The group has continued to meet regularly, although interest in football has declined as the membership of the group has changed. Attendance at the group has varied over time but there have been about 34 young people regularly accessing the centre, obviously dependent on their foster care placements etc. A further 30 young people have benefited from support with transport and staffing that has enabled them to access activities outside of the centre during the holidays.

ACHIEVEMENTS

8. The group took part in a residential experience at Stainsacre last year and is actively looking for funding for this year. Two members of the group have taken part in a residential as part of their OCN training for Monitoring and Evaluation. 1 Young person is involved with the National Children's and Young Peoples Board.
9. Three young people have gained sectional awards for the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Six young people have gained accreditation for the Boro Award level 1. Two young people have achieved OCN level 1. Three young people are waiting for external moderator decision. Four young people have had involvement with the Youth Council and the Youth Opportunity Fund.
10. Four young people successfully carried out some research and applied for funding to provide activities for other children looked after during the 2007 summer holidays. In total, 63 children and young people took part in a wide range of activities including snowboarding, skiing, sailing and horse riding.

OPTION APPRAISAL/RISK ASSESSMENT

11. Option one is not to offer a specific provision. The risk of this would be that there would be no specific provision and that the Youth Service would not achieve a recommendation in its Ofsted report of 2004.
12. Option two would be the preferred option to develop the provision for Children Looked After.
13. No other Risk Assessments were needed other than the generic one for the Centre, however, there have been risk assessments devised to support individuals around some of their behaviour.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

14. There are no financial implications as all resources are drawn from existing staff and resources within the Youth Service. There are no legal implications arising from this report. All wards affected as the young people live across Middlesbrough.

RECOMMENDATIONS

15. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to recognise the ongoing contribution made by the Youth Service to enable the Local Authority to fulfil it's obligation as a Corporate Parent.

REASONS

16. This recommendation is supported by the following reasons:
 - a. The Youth provision helps builds the confidence and self worth of the young people in the children looked after group.
 - b. This activity enables the Local Authority to be a good parent by adopting a holistic approach to the needs of children looked after.
 - c. This provision helps the Youth Service to respond to one of the recommendations made by Ofsted in 2004.
 - d. This information raises the profile of the skills of staff available within the Local Authority.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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