

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

19th JUNE 2008

**DRAFT CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER STRATEGY
2008-2009**

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to present to Members part 1 of the draft Children Looked After Strategy for 2008 to 2009 and the associated action plan (See Appendix 1).

BACKGROUND AND EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

2. Central government requires local authorities to keep services for children looked after as a key focus for their resources and sets clear targets and performance indicators in respect of those services. The purpose of this strategy is to assess current provision for children looked after by Middlesbrough Council and to define strategic priorities for those children and young people.
3. The strategy is in two parts, with the first part addressing the key issues arising from analysis of data and the second part focusing on improving specific outcomes for children looked after. Consideration will be given to introducing a 'Virtual Head Teacher' and a 'Virtual School' alongside a re-alignment of some services and posts to improve overall integration. The second part of this strategy will also report on the wider aspects of services for looked after children and young people's health and well-being.

4. An analysis of current and historic data clearly indicates:
 - An increase in the number of children and young people becoming looked after.
 - The greatest increase is in age groups 1-4 years and 10-15 years.
 - This increase is concentrated within TS1 & TS3.
 - The most common reason is 'abuse or neglect' followed by family dysfunction.
 - Many children become looked after without having any prior contact with social care services.
 - Police Protection Orders appear to be volatile from year to year.
 - An increase in the number of purchased foster placements, particularly for 10-15 year olds.
 - The purchase of foster placements has resulted in an overall increase in the budget for looked after children since 05/06.
 - A reduction in adoptions and a low level of Special Guardianship and Residence Orders.
 - The stability of placements has been strong and is being maintained.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2008-2009

5. Based on these findings, three strategic priorities have been identified for the coming year:
 - To reduce the number of looked after children
 - To extend the range and type of placements
 - To improve practice in relation to Permanency Orders
6. An action plan has been developed to address these priorities and is attached at Appendix 1. The main emphasis is on strengthening the preventative measures that will contribute to reducing the number of children and young people becoming looked after.

OPTION APPRAISAL/RISK ASSESSMENT

7. Not applicable to this report.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

8. There are no immediate financial or legal implications arising from this report. Services for children looked after cover all Wards so this report will be of interest to all Members.

RECOMMENDATION

9. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to endorse the approach being adopted to reduce the numbers of children looked after and to achieve the best possible outcomes for those who do become looked after.

REASON

10. Middlesbrough Council has a clear statutory duty to safeguard children and to look after children whose parents are unable, for whatever reason, to do so themselves. This strategy is intended to ensure that the Council can fulfil those statutory duties as efficiently and effectively as possible.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no background papers used in the preparation of this report.

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APPENDIX 1

Children Looked After Strategy Action Plan 2008-2009

Key Service Outcome	Actions	Indicator	Lead Agency & Partners	Resources	Milestones/Timescale
1.0 To reduce the number of Looked After Children					
1.1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the preventative strategy and ensure that there is sufficient capacity and focus to deliver the strategy to maximum effect. Specific attention will be focused on the age groups 1-4 and 10-15 years 	Complete preventative strategy with the focus on the specified age groups and geographic documentation.	To increase nos of CAF. Keep repeat referrals low. Reduction in c & yp protection plans	C,F&L and Children's Trust	Existing budgets	Strategy in place Sept 2008
1.2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the increased uptake of CAF in all agencies across a range of needs and age groups 	Complete re-modelling of the CAF post 1.4.08	Increase CAFs Increase range of agencies completing CAFs Evidence successful outcomes of no further referral requirements	C,F&L and Children's Trust	Continuous funding April – Sept 2008	Re-modelling to be completed by Sept 2008
1.3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the application of assessment and intervention in relation to domestic violence, substance misuse and neglect 	Monitor the use and outcomes of assessments in these areas of need	Specific monitoring in localities Measure impact on c.p. plans and lac number	C,F&L and Children's Trust	Existing budgets	Ongoing. Review on a quarterly basis

Key Service Outcome	Actions	Indicator	Lead Agency & Partners	Resources	Milestones/Timescale
1.0 To reduce the number of Looked After Children					
1.4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the use of a range of parenting programmes which give successful results in children and young people remaining within their families 	Implementation of the parenting strategy	Data recording parenting strategy take up rates	C,F&L and Children's Trust	Existing budgets	Quarterly review
1.5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the types of services delivered in TS1 and TS3 and adjust in accordance with the pressure points that lead to children and young people becoming looked after. Also review the work of the Family Resource team to ensure a specific focus on those children at greatest risk of becoming looked after 	Review to take place within the Preventative Strategy	Refer to 1.7	C,F&L and Children's Trust	Existing budgets	To be completed Sept 2008
	Review of FRT	Review complete and focus on those children at greatest risk of becoming looked after	C,F&L and Children's Trust	Budget implications to be reviewed	To be completed June 2008
1.6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the current level of usage of Family Group Conferences (including those who have been accommodated) 	Review current usage	Establish a set of indicators to track activity in-house c&yp most at risk of becoming cla	C,F&L and Children's Trust	Existing budgets	To be completed July 2008

Key Service Outcome	Actions	Indicator	Lead Agency & Partners	Resources	Milestones/Timescale
1.0 To reduce the number of Looked After Children					
1.7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish targets that all agencies are aware of, and can contribute to, for each locality and for post code districts 	Establish locality data set to encompass all data requirements	Establish a set of indicators to track activity in-house c&yp most at risk of becoming cla	C,F&L and Children's Trust	Existing budgets	To be completed July 2008
1.8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the use of impact analysis to assess if the work that is taking place is having the intended positive benefit 	Establish locality data set to encompass all data requirements	Establish a set of indicators to track activity in-house c&yp most at risk of becoming cla	C,F&L and Children's Trust	Existing budgets	To be completed July 2008
1.9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of children and young people who are worked with prior to becoming looked after 	Refer to 1.1, 1.2 & 1.6	Refer to 1.1, 1.2 & 1.6	C,F&L and Children's Trust	Existing budgets	To be completed July 2008
1.10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the use of outreach work to ensure support to children and young people as they return to live in the community using a range of resources and intensive support 	Refer to 1.1, 1.2 & 1.5	Refer to 1.1, 1.2 & 1.5	C,F&L and Children's Trust	Existing budgets	To be completed July 2008

Key Service Outcome	Actions	Indicator	Lead Agency & Partners	Resources	Milestones/Timescale
1.0 To reduce the number of Looked After Children					
1.11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the use of permanency orders in all appropriate cases 	Review current policies and procedures. Introduce more training	Increase the use of Adoption, Special Guardianship and Residence Orders	C,F&L and Children's Trust	Review budget implications	Quarterly triggers to be set
1.12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the use of parenting work in relation to access, take-up and impact across all localities and in specific post code areas 	Review current profile of parenting work	Evidence of increased access to parenting work across localities specifically and post code area	C,F&L and Children's Trust	Existing budgets	Quarterly review
1.13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the current use of thresholds to assess consistency and applicability across a range of agencies. This work could be undertaken by the South Tees SCB 	Undertake review	Data set to be established to cover referrals through to cpp and lac, including conversion levels	C,F&L and Children's Trust STLSCB	Existing budgets	Monthly reporting and quarterly review
1.14 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a protocol to ensure that the response to emergency admissions is consistent and measured in order to enable the necessary matching and finding of placements 	Protocol to be established through LSCB	Reduction in the use of PPP's	STLSCB	Existing budgets	Monthly reporting and quarterly review

Key Service Outcome	Actions	Indicator	Lead Agency & Partners	Resources	Milestones/Timescale
1.0 To reduce the number of Looked After Children					
1.15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the processes which lead to the decision to look after a child 	Undertake review. Introduce revised system	Monitor implementation and impact on decision making in lac and cp	C, F& L and CT	Review impact on budget	Monthly report and quarterly reviews
1.16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of children who are placed with family and friends 	Refer to 1.6 and 1.11	Increase in the number of c & yp placed with family and friends	C, F&L and CT	Existing budgets	Monthly report & quarterly review
1.17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review those children and young people placed with parents 	Review of all placements with particular reference to those placed for longer than 1 year	Complete review and reduce the number of those children and yp placed with parents under a C.O. for longer than 1 year	C,F& L	Existing budgets	Monthly report & quarterly review
1.18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review those children and young people who are both looked after and registered 	Review of STLSCB procedures	Review in accordance with procedural requirements	C,F&L	Existing budgets	Monthly report & quarterly review

Key Service Outcome	Actions	Indicator	Lead Agency & Partners	Resources	Milestones/Timescale
1.0 To reduce the number of Looked After Children					
1.19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the processes which informs decision making regarding the type of accommodation 	Refer to 1.5. Undertake needs analysis to check availability matches requirements	Monitor gaps in provision and align both the commissioning strategy, foster care recruitment campaign and supported housing scheme for care leavers	C, F&L	Existing budgets	Monthly report & quarterly review
1.20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discharge Care Orders for those children placed with parents for over one year 	Refer to 1.17	Refer to 1.17	C,F&L	Existing budgets	Monthly report & quarterly review
1.21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-disciplinary meetings to be held within 2 weeks of the date of admission 	Revise policy and procedures	Introducing M-A meetings and monitor impact	C,F&L and CT	Existing budgets	Monthly report & quarterly review
1.22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly management information to be provided to all managers regarding admissions and discharges 	Data set established	Process for review feeding into Locality Meetings and C.T.	C,F&L and CT	Existing budget	Monthly report & quarterly review

Key Service Outcome	Actions	Indicator	Lead Agency & Partners	Resources	Milestones/Timescale
2.0 To extend the range and type of placement					
2.1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise the current levels of allowances for foster carers and implement a new structure 	Review ongoing	Improve retention and remuneration	C,F&L	Budgetary impact considered as part of the review	Review completed by June 2008
2.2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of local in-house Middlesbrough foster carers with specific attention to those needs which have previously resulted in the purchasing of placements 	Target set. Recruitment campaign underway	Target set. 18 foster carers (32 placements by end of 2009)	C,F&L	Budgetary review ongoing	Panel data reviewed and reported quarterly
2.3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the level of advertising and raising the profile of the foster care service in Middlesbrough 	Current foster carer recruitment campaign underway	Review impact and review advertising strategy	C,F&L	Budgetary review ongoing	June 2008
2.4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the use of residential provision in the current commissioning arrangements 	Review to commence in May 2008	Review needs of young people for residential accommodation and our use/provision	C,F&L	Existing budgets	June 2008

Key Service Outcome	Actions	Indicator	Lead Agency & Partners	Resources	Milestones/Timescale
2.0 To extend the range and type of placement					
2.5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the level of usage of independent fostering agencies and develop more strategic commissioning particularly in relation to the 10-15 years age group 	Refer to 2.2 and 2.4	Review needs of children and yp for fostering and develop commissioning strategy to meet those placement requirements	C,F&L	Existing budgets	June 2008
2.6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly management information regarding admissions & discharges and a range of data to assist with improving performance. 	Data set established	Process for review feeding into Locality Meetings and C.T.	C,F&L and CT	Existing budget	Monthly report and quarterly review

Key Service Outcome	Actions	Indicator	Lead Agency & Partners	Resources	Milestones/Timescale
3.0 To improve practice in relation to Permanency Orders					
3.1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the use of adoption, special guardianship and residence orders. This will include additional training for staff and managers 	Monitor the use of all orders	Establish targets for all permanency orders for 08/09	C,F&L	Review budgets as increase in orders takes place	Monthly report and quarterly review
3.2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the work on the special guardianship order policy and procedures and implement with training and awareness raising for all agencies 	Complete ongoing work and initiate SG training	Target to be set for special guardianship	C,F&L	Review budgets as increase in orders takes place	Monthly report and quarterly review
3.3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intensively monitor the application of the Permanency policy to ensure there is no drift 	Monitor the use of all orders	Establish targets for all permanency orders for 08/09	C, F&L	Review budgets as increase in orders takes place	Monthly report and quarterly review
3.4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the introduction of a permanency officer to provide an initial focus to this work 	Undertake - Develop? - a Business Case	Review previous performance and link to intended targets	C,F&L	Consider budgetary implications	August 2008

Key Service Outcome	Actions	Indicator	Lead Agency & Partners	Resources	Milestones/Timescale
3.0 To improve practice in relation to Permanency Orders					
3.5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the allowances and support special guardianship and residence orders 	Review allowances	Review previous performance and link to intended targets	C,F&L	Consider budgetary implications	August 2008
3.6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation and use of Cost Calculator to improve financial information and analysis/benchmarking. 	Implement cost calculator	Use financial analysis as provided by the cost calculator	C,F&L	Existing budgets with planned reductions	Sept 2008