

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD  
31<sup>st</sup> JULY 2008**

**MIDDLESBROUGH FAMILY PLACEMENT PANEL  
ACTIVITY REPORT FOR  
OCTOBER 2007 TO MARCH 2008**

**MIKE CARR - EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN FAMILIES  
& LEARNING**

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

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**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 1<sup>st</sup> October 2007 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008.

**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 that 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:
- (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 1<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2007 TO 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2008

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	6
Number of children whose adoption plans were approved	9
Number of children whose placements with adoptive parents were approved	4
Number of foster carers approved	6
Number of foster carers who were de-registered	5
Number of children whose long-term fostering plans were approved	6
Number of children whose placements with long-term foster carers were approved	5
Number of foster carer reviews that were considered	24
Number of supported lodgings approved	1
Number of reports which were deferred due to concerns over the quality of the report	2
Number of reports presented for consultation or update on a specific issue	1
Total numbers of items considered	69

8. It will be noted that 5 foster carers were de-registered during this period. Two of these came about because the foster carers resigned following the end of a long-term placement, one because the carers had been inactive for some time and had not responded to our attempts to contact them, one because the child they were

fostering became subject to a residence order and one because there were concerns about the standard of care provided.

9. For comparison purposes, the following table shows items considered by the Panel over an 18-month period:

	Oct 06 to Mar 07	Apr 07 to Sept 07	Oct 07 to Mar 08
Number of panel meetings held	12	13	13
Number of adopters approved	5	8	6
Withdrawal of approved adopters	1	0	0
Number of children whose adoption plans were approved	4	9	9
Number of children whose placements with adoptive parents were approved	3	13	4
Number of foster carers approved	0	0	6
Number of foster carers who were approved for a change of registration	2	0	0
Number of foster carers who were de-registered	3	4	5
Number of children whose long-term fostering plans were approved	5	3	6
Number of children whose placements with long-term foster carers were approved	4	3	5
Number of foster carer reviews that were considered	39	29	24
Number of reports presented for approval of a change of plan for a child	1	1	0
Number of reports presented for consultation or update on a specific issue	1	1	1
Number of reports which were deferred due to concerns over the quality of the reports	3	0	2
Number of supported lodgings approved	0	0	1
Total numbers of items considered	71	71	69

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. 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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