



## **CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**22<sup>ND</sup> JANUARY 2009**

### **PLEDGE - UPDATE**

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

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

---

#### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Corporate Parenting Board of the progress made in relation to the development of Middlesbrough's Pledge to Children Looked After.

#### **BACKGROUND & CONSULTATION**

2. As previously reported (11/9/2008 & 4/12/2008) work is underway in Middlesbrough to develop a Pledge to Children Looked After.

#### **PLEDGE DEVELOPMENT EVENT**

3. A report on the Pledge Development Event held in October 2008 is attached (Appendix A). This reflects the discussions between children, young people, Members of the Corporate Parenting Board and managers, and the key issues identified during the event.
4. The report recommends a further event for adults and children and young people to take place during the February half-term week. It also recommends that separate sessions be held for adults and children and young people in advance of the joint event. This will enable each group to reflect on the outcomes of the first event and identify the issues that they would like to prioritise for inclusion within the Pledge.

## **PLEDGE QUESTIONNAIRES**

5. Questionnaires were sent out to children and young people seeking their views on what might be included in the Pledge. Different formats were used for different ages and asked children and young people to say what we might do to help them to achieve the Every Child Matters outcomes. The feedback from the questionnaires is summarised in Appendix B.

## **OPTION APPRAISAL/RISK ASSESSMENT**

6. Not applicable to this report.

## **FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS**

7. The finance required to support this process is being met from the Care Matters grant funding. There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report. Corporate parenting is a town-wide responsibility so this report will be of interest to all elected Members.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

8. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board:
  - a). agree to meet to discuss the outcome of the Pledge development event in advance of a joint event in half-term week
  - b). advise the Executive to note the progress made in developing the Middlesbrough Pledge.

## **REASONS**

9. It is important that elected Members and Senior Managers have time to consider their responses to children and young people in relation to the development of the Pledge. This preparation will also enable Members to deliver on their promise that the Corporate Parenting Board would discuss these issues further.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

10. The following background papers were used in preparing this report:
  - The Pledge 'A Promise you Have to Keep' (January 2009)
  - Summary of Questionnaires (January 2009)

**Author:** Sue Little, Children's Participation Officer  
**Tel No:** 01642 728706

---

*Address: 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Vancouver House, Gurney Street, Middlesbrough, TS1 1EL*  
*Website: <http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk>*

# THE PLEDGE

## 'A Promise You Have To Keep'



Pledge Development Event for Children Looked After  
30<sup>th</sup> October 2008

# Make me a Promise

## Background

The 'Make me a Promise' event was planned and facilitated by Time Out of the Box, in conjunction with staff from Middlesbrough Children, Families & Learning Department. Middlesbrough Council is responding positively to the Government's aspiration to generate joint working and decision making between children and young people who are cared for by local authorities and those responsible as Corporate Parents.

The aim and desired outcomes, given the time constraints, were determined and ambitious:

**Aim:** To engage children looked after by Middlesbrough Council in the process of developing a Pledge and identifying children and young people who might be interested in taking part in the Children in Care Council.

### **Outcomes:**

Children and young people will:

- Understand what the Pledge is about
- Have a chance to say the kind of things that should be in the Pledge
- Understand the idea of a Children in Care Council
- Have a chance to give their views about what the Children in Care Council should look like
- Have a chance to explore how much or how little they want to get involved in these processes
- Have some fun

Children, Families & Learning will:

- Have a clearer idea of children and young people's views on the Pledge and the Children in Care Council
- Understand what action needs to be taken to make further progress in the development of a 1<sup>st</sup> draft Pledge by January 2009

The event took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2008 between 10.00 am and 7.00 pm, with separate sessions for children and young people of different ages.

There were 26 children and young people, aged between 6 and 20 years, who attended and contributed positively. These children and young people worked together with adults with a range of responsibilities, including foster parents, residential care staff, social workers, reviewing officers, senior managers and members of the Corporate Parenting Board. 24 adults attended and invested their time and interest in the children and young people, encouraging them to say what they want or need, to tell and share how they feel and to find positive ways of moving forward.

The structure of the day meant that each age group worked together for approximately two hours. Priorities emerged through the process of delivery that meant the following activities became most important:

- Identifying what a promise is (Appendix 1.)
- Encouraging adults and children to work together as a team
- Sharing ideas about experiences of Every Child Matters from the child or young person's perspective (Appendix 2.)
- Generate confidence in children and young people to challenge positively (Appendix 3.)
- Advocate and support for the children and young people whilst challenging

The outcomes reflect the joint efforts of the children, young people and adults. There is a commitment for a second event and this information will be carried forward to support those involved in determining what the 'pledge' or 'promise' for 2009 will look like.

## Reflection, Evaluation & Recommendations

### Time

Time allocated to the next event does need careful consideration. The next stage will need to be very focused upon the views and opinions of people in relation to what needs to be included in the Pledge. There should be carefully and skillfully facilitated sessions whereby children, young people and adults discuss, negotiate and agree objectives and priorities. Each age group will need a suitable amount of time and support to work on the Pledge.

It is important to stress that on the 30<sup>th</sup> October, the adults involved also required support to get the best out of this opportunity.

### Support

Most of the staff acknowledged the need to support the children and young people before, during and after the event. This was managed effectively and certainly in the process of delivery some of the children and young people required various levels of support.

It is paramount that similar attention is paid to the needs of adults in this scenario. Some of the adults are far removed from face to face work with children and young people with a range of needs. Also, facilitation prior to the event will create additional value. During the workshop time we had available, more effective briefing to the adults may have promoted more effective/ productive interaction. It is important for the success of the next phase that the development and preparation work is extended to everyone involved.

## Human Resource

During the workshop there were times when we fell short on people to support the various activities we planned to deliver and that was particularly highlighted in two areas:

1. When the children and young people were escorted and supported to meet the adults' panel and ask their questions, there should have been two members of staff available to stay with the remainder of the group.
2. More robust arrangements are required to record the discussions between the children and young people and the adults. Whilst the children and young people took their own notes of the adults' responses, a more detailed record of the discussions would have been beneficial. Potentially a Dictaphone or film recording during debate and interaction may be helpful in this respect.

## Outcome

- The day was extremely constructive and much was achieved in terms of building relationships and confidence between adults, young people and children. The information shared will be valuable as a contribution to the next phase.
- All of the outcomes were addressed and most achieved, although more work is required on the idea of a Children's Council and how children and young people would like to shape that for the future.
- The range of issues raised by the children and young people was both important and challenging, which provides the perfect platform for the next meeting to generate a Pledge for Corporate Parenting in Middlesbrough.
- In relation to the questions raised by children and young people, adults offered a variety of responses and explanations. A frequent response was that the Corporate Parenting board would discuss these issues in more detail. This work should be undertaken as part of a preparatory process leading up to the next event.

# What is a promise?

“Something you say you will do in the future... and you mean it”

“A promise is a commitment, from one person to another”

“Someone who promises you to go out with you”

“Something that you keep”

“Intention to do something”

“Not to be broken”

“To look after children”

“Trust, rely, do what you say”

“Is something someone sticks by”

“Is an agreement”

“Something you keep with you 4eva”

“When you say something and stick to it”

“Is when you tell some1 you're going to do or get them something U have 2 get”

“U say u will do something & stick to it”

“Some1 who promises to turn up”

“Something that some1 promises to do 4u”

“If you say you're going to do something u have to do it”

“Promise u keep your word”

“An agreement not to be broken”

“To do what you say”

“Not to break a promise cos they're important”

“Saying something u really mean & carrying it out”

“Willing to do something say ur going 2 do”

“Something you say and something you stick to”

“Something you say, mean & do”

“Keeping your word”

# Every Child Matters

## Mind Mapping

### 6-12 years

#### Staying safe:

- Keeping private
- Do not go out on your own
- Keep safe in the car
- Don't be bullying
- Helmets

#### Enjoy & Achieve:

##### Enjoy...

- Activities
- Halloween
- Christmas
- Birthday
- Games
- Easter
- Play outside
- Parties

##### Achieve:

- Going to other peoples houses
- Meeting different people
- Playing in play areas
- Go on to the beach
- Playing in the park
- Learning a new thing
- Doing maths
- Playing on the computer
- Building with blocks
- Playing with balloons

### 6-12 years

#### Making a positive contribution:

- Why are so many people from other countries allowed into ours?
- Why do people have to kill other people?
- Why do we have wars in countries?
- What are you doing to involve us in stopping gangs?
- Youth bus
- Whinney Banks
- Kings Academy School Council
- Believe that stop selling knives to young people
- Why do we have to share the world with black people?

#### Be Healthy:

- Eating veg
- Exercise
- Making sure its available – in school they gave more fruit
- Play games and keep you healthy
- Trampoline
- Bike
- Scooter
- Gym
- Swimming
- Provide food
- Get enough sleep
- Reading, be happy



## 13-15 years

### Staying Safe:

- Always let someone know where you are
- Don't talk to strangers, walk away and tell my parents (don't panic all the time, they may just need help)
- Say no to drink and drugs
- Personal safety – don't tell people your passwords
- Don't carry weapons
- Always call others or friends if your parents or carers are bullying or abusing you.
- Internet, text or school – bullies are scum bags
- Don't leave others out
- Respect for each other
- Treat others how you wish them to treat you
- Verbal and emotional abuse is wrong
- Be careful of vehicles – take details of person/vehicle
- Be in early in Winter

## 13-15 years

### Enjoy & Achieve:

- Avoid peer pressure
- Be yourself not a pretender
- School – 100% attendance
- Don't let jealousy get the best of you
- Never let people stop you from doing your best
- ICT lessons – teachers that listen and having a voice in lessons
- I enjoy being on my bike
- I like PE
- I like BTEC sport & leisure
- Being by yourself, thinking, chilling
- Don't do things because your mate does it
- Being with family
- Reading 4 books a week – achievement
- Being in bed, warm and reading
- My achievements are doing my duke of Edinburgh in February
- Going out with friends
- Give young people the choice of career & education before they leave school.

## 13-15 years

### Making a positive contribution:

- Cleaning the environment
- Helping the community
- Getting in a group & make positive team
- Value diversity
- Everyone gets involved
- Get young people involved in more activities like this
- Getting on with people is number 1 priority, if you didn't get on with people the world would be a horrid place
- Communication – help on littering, help OAP's with shopping or crossing the road
- Get involved in decision making
- RSPCA
- Bright Start
- Be open minded
- Explain religions, traditions, beliefs, and values to young people
- Help people if they struggle with things
- Mix with different people

## 13-15 years

### Be healthy:

- Eating veg
- Obesity
- Doing PE, get Wii Fit
- Have effective exercise
- Healthy & balanced diet
- No 2 drugs
- Don't smoke, don't drink too much, don't take drugs
- Binge drinking and smoking is bad for you, don't do it
- Road safety
- Eating disorders
- Hygiene
- Mental health, take pills, get help, tell someone
- Don't be pressured into having sex, tell someone
- Contraceptive advice
- Cervical cancer, information, injection
- Don't self harm
- Don't bottle things up inside
- Be aware of sexually transmitted disease
- Dentist, doctors, optician checks
- Private space, relax zone

## 16+ yr olds

### Staying Safe:

- Picking good friends
- Helping us safely develop as young adults
- Transport to & from school
- Reviewing relationships at home and with friends
- Self hygiene
- Safety awareness
- Food hygiene, food storage
- C Card
- Drugs awareness
- Sexual education
- Downloading unknown images on the internet
- Not talking to strangers on the internet
- Mobile phones
- Safe & caring environment
- Listening
- Telling whereabouts
- Youth clubs
- Housing checks, gas leaks etc
- Advice & guidance
- Complaints procedure NYAS
- Boundaries & rules
- Education
- Be responsible

## 16+ yr olds

### Enjoy & Achieve

- Help to find a job
- Lend us money
- Funding for activities and equipment
- Seeing old friends
- Fund bus fair/lifts
- Supporting me to go to college
- Setting up home grant
- Clubs to socialize
- Toddler groups for looked after single parents
- Independent traveling
- Access to internet/computer
- Financial help
- Guidance & support
- Leisure/sport activities
- Good attendance
- Health
- Hobbies
- Social life
- College
- Drive

## 16+ yr olds

### Making a positive contribution:

- Connexions
- Job opportunities
- School clubs
- Being a good neighbour
- Socials
- Like independence
- Attending pledge meeting
- Deciding where to go in life when leaving LCT
- Volunteering
- Be thankful for your independence
- Job interviews
- Sharing ideas
- Sleeping out safety
- Keeping out of a serious situation

## 16+ yr olds

### Be healthy:

- Gym/football
- Keeps appointments
- Food hygiene
- Swimming
- Education
- AC meetings advisors from different organizations to inform us of their service
- 4 good meals a day
- Sexual health, C Card, safe sex, safe relationship
- No late nights
- Make sure you have a doctor/dentist/optician
- Self harm/emotional issues – professional help
- Advice on personal hygiene
- Nurse fastened to AC, who is very confidential
- Don't smoke, drink, do drugs
- Healthy eating
- Drug awareness
- Fruit & veg

# Every Child Matters

## Questions Raised

The questions raised at the event by the children and young people have been categorised here only by heading. The issues discussed by the children, young people and adults were all prompted by the Every Child Matters outcomes. We have not, in this section, linked the questions asked with the age of participants.

### Staying Safe

- What are you doing to involve us in stopping gangs?
- How can you stop us from being bullied for being in care?
- How can we talk confidentially, about others, without holding back?
- How can you make sure our details on files are not viewed by others?
- have you ever been – bullied about where you came from or what your lyf was lyk?
- was your child hood bad?
- have you ever been forced to do things?
- Will you or have you ever know what it feels like to be Rejected by your birth parents?
- Should be able to talk to School Governor/ Governors over the phone about bullying + then something to be done at school.
- Can health professionals come to us instead of us going to them, our environment, a safe environment
- Can you help us find siblings we do not know?

### Enjoy & Achieve

- While children are in care we should get asked if we are happy
- Why do different towns or cities have different insentives than us?
- Funding for further education?
- Are we entitled to a clothing allowance for children in care & care leavers?
- Holidays? – do you think children like us would like the experience? Some do – some children do not get to go on holiday.
- Play professional football, Can you fund me to do it? (or performing arts, boxing, dancing)
- Would really like driving lessons as it is key to open doors/opportunities
- How can you help us have time out what is all about me? 1-1's but having fun.
- Can you buy our passports, as we feel left out when friends go on hols

## Making a Positive Contribution

- How can we make sure we are happy in our places and our comments are taken seriously?
- How can you get young people more involved in interviews and appointing?
- How can you help us get involved in the community?
- How can the council find us F.P. that we enjoy being with? Can we have a choice?

## Be Healthy

- Do you think kids are getting enough exercise by running?
- Do you think a trampoline is enough exercise for children?
- How can you help us spend time with other children in care?
- Do you think the change should be having more fruit and veg?
- What are you doing to make sure kids have more fruit and veg?
- confidence – different agencies to help us i.e. psychologist, careers advisors, clothing
- Will you make counseling clubs for young (teenagers) who self harm. CAHMS dosent always HElp!

## Achieve Economic Well-Being

- How much do you think we should have for pocket money?
- We already have money for living, but please can you give us money for activities? If not why?
- Do you think that driving helps you get around to work and makes working a lot easier?
- Do you think that we should be eligible for payments for driving lessons?
- Support with housing e.g. checking if bills are getting paid on time
- Help with travel costs, to see family in other towns

**IF NOT, WHY?**

### Pledge Questionnaire Summary of Key Issues

#### Be Healthy

- **Healthy eating** - suggestions included giving care leavers free fruit and veg and *"promoting healthy food around town rather than burger shops"*
- **Exercise** - lots of references to having free access to swimming and to the gym
- **Being happy & content** - included being in a safe, secure environment, having positive relationships, having fun, feeling supported and being helped to understand their situation/ discuss their feelings
- **Access to health care services** - included doctors, dentists, opticians and regular health assessments
- **Substance misuse and sexual health** - included a reference to the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation making young people vulnerable to substance misuse

#### Stay Safe

- **Secure Placements and Safe Accommodation** - the importance of having good carers and the dangers of Bed & Breakfast accommodation
- **Support and Advice on Staying Safe** - suggestions included having more lollipop ladies, giving out personal alarms; more training for foster carers; and giving advice on stranger danger, dealing with difficult situations and substance misuse
- **Contact with Family** - ranged from regarding family as part of a safety net to concerns about feeling under pressure to have contact and ensuring that contact is supervised
- **Having someone to talk to** - foster carers, family, social workers, *"somebody who can give me a hug when I am down"*

#### Enjoy and Achieve

- **Help with bullying and feeling safe** - some people have had help with bullying from school and social work staff, some asked for more advice on dealing with bullies, others stressed the need to feel safe in school
- **Help with school work and homework** - suggestions included buying books, access to the internet for research, help with basis skills (spelling and writing), better school libraries, not cancelling lessons (referred to individual tuition) and asking what kind of day they've had at school

- **Friendships** - included the importance of making and keeping friends at school and college
- **Education placements** - some people want to stay in the same school, others were glad they had moved to get away from bullies, one suggested having a centre for excluded children and *"help children who have learning disabilities or feel uncomfortable at school"*
- **Financial support** - for higher education, computers and equipment needed for work
- **Provide leisure and culture activities** - provide more trips to museums and culture places, funding for holidays, more sport and leisure activities, more free after school clubs

### **Make a positive contribution**

- **Positive Relationships** - included friends, families and neighbours, listening to others and being listened to by others, being polite, having someone to talk to, staff to be better at talking to young people
- **Positive Activities** - activities after school and at night to keep children out of trouble, more support to stop children 'kicking off', *"support me and encourage me to be a good Role model"*
- **Getting Involved in Decision-making** - suggest changes, *"attend your reviews and have your say"*, access to advocacy
- **Helping Others** - volunteering, give people food, help at clubs for less advantaged people, cadets, guides
- **Look After the Environment** - be tidy, don't litter, don't vandalise

### **Achieve economic well-being**

- **Independent living skills** - help with budgeting, how to look after yourself, learn how to respect yourself and others
- **Education and Employment** - help children to concentrate more at school, support to do well at school or college, more training courses, help to get decent qualifications and a job
- **Financial support** - funding for education, help with student loans
- **Driving lessons** - linked to improving job prospects, included specialist licences for professional drivers
- **Better housing for care leavers** - reference to safe accommodation and the option of being looked after in a care home (from someone in secure accommodation)
- **Personal Support** - having good carers, having someone who will fight their corner, having contact with family, *"ask us what we want to be when we grow up"*