

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on 5 March 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor McIntyre (Chair), Councillors Brunton, Carr, Carter, Dryden, J Hobson, Kerr and P Rogers..

OFFICERS: J Kochanowski, S Harker, C Kendrick, S Little and J Young.

PRESENT AS AN OBSERVER: Mr B Simpson.

****APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor B Thompson.

****DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No Declarations of Interest were made at this point of the meeting.

**** MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board held on 22 January 2009 were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

SUMMARY OF REGULATION 33 REPORTS AND ROTA VISITS

The Review and Development Manager presented a report to inform the Corporate Parenting Board of the outcomes of Regulation 33 visits to Five Rivers and Gleneagles Resource Centre and to provide an update on the situation regarding rota visits.

The report covered the period January-December 2008 and contained information relating to the admission and discharge of young people, consultation and support, and meeting the needs of young people against the Every Child Matters outcomes. Independent Social Workers carried out Regulation 33 visits on a monthly basis and completed reports that were forwarded to OFSTED, the Executive Director Children Families and Learning, the Deputy Director Safeguarding, the Service Manager, Specialist Services and the Manager of the home. Identified actions were progressed by Management within Five Rivers and Gleneagles.

The general findings of the inspections were positive. Recommendations were made on a monthly basis to promote the continued development of the services. A sample of the comments contained within the reports for each home was provided in the submitted report.

In 2007 the Deputy Mayor had invited Elected Members to express an interest in undertaking rota visits. Seven Members had expressed an interest, one of whom had already received training on the role. A further five Members undertook the necessary training in October 2008 and an additional training session was provided for those Members who would visit Gleneagles.

Since there were more Members than homes to visit, Members had been paired up and could therefore provide cover for each other. The Chair stated that she would also like to undertake rota visits. Rota visits had now commenced and more detailed information on the outcomes would be available in the next Regulation 33 report.

RECOMMENDED that the Executive be advised to note the information relating to Regulation 33 and rota visits.

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER STRATEGY – PART TWO

The Team Manager Leaving Care Service presented Part Two of the draft Children Looked After Strategy and the associated Action Plan to the Corporate Parenting Board for approval. The Strategy aimed to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people looked after and those leaving care.

The Strategy set out the Council's priorities for children looked after (CLA) in two parts, part one had been presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in June 2008 and focused primarily on measures intended to prevent children becoming looked after. Part Two aimed to set out how the Council, as a corporate parent, aimed to meet the holistic needs of children and young people who are looked after.

Based on the Council's performance against government targets, data analysis and local need and the requirements of Care Matters, five strategic priorities had been identified for the coming year as follows:

- To ensure the Council, as a corporate parent, was proactive in meeting the needs of children and young people in care.
- To maintain, and build on, the improvements in the health and wellbeing of CLA.
- To improve the educational attainment of children and young people in care.
- To deliver the Care Matters agenda.
- To ensure young people had a successful transition to adulthood.

An action plan had been developed to address these priorities and was attached at Appendix 1 to the submitted report. The main emphasis was on improving the educational outcomes of CLA; maintaining performance in ensuring placement stability and addressing the health needs of children and young people looked after.

Panel Members highlighted several aspects of the action plan and further information was provided.

With regard to educational attainment a further report in relation to comparisons with Middlesbrough's statistical neighbours would be presented to the Board. Resources had been targeted at Key Stage 4 to try and keep young people engaged with the learning and have more positive outcomes. During the last financial year the Schools Forum had made an additional £50,000 available to target Key Stage 4 pupils. A bid had been made for further funding for 2009/2010. More vocational learning such as BTEC qualifications had been introduced and there were very few young people who were not achieving accreditation. Approximately £5000 funding had been allocated from the Area Based (Care Matters) Grant for Personal Education Allowances to help CLA with their learning.

At the current time 49% of Middlesbrough's CLA were educated outside of Middlesbrough's boundaries. There was a particularly large cohort this year of forty-three Year 10 pupils and work was being undertaken to see what could be done to educate these pupils in Middlesbrough schools.

With regard to service outcomes CLA would be given clear information about the services and support they could expect to receive from the Local Authority and its partners within the Pledge and within Care Plans. There was a Service Guide for Care Leavers. When a young person reached the age of 18 they were interviewed to ascertain their views on their care experience and this was repeated at age 21.

Children and young people had been involved in service planning processes and this could be evidenced in terms of the development of the Pledge. Once the Children in Care Council was established every plan would come to it for approval.

In terms of the recruitment strategy it was particularly difficult to recruit foster carers of dual heritage. Support was engaged from the Sahara Project when children were placed with foster carers who did not have the same heritage.

Another issue highlighted was the introduction of a Virtual Headteacher for CLA. Eleven local authorities were currently undertaking pilots and feedback was awaited. Data such as attendance and attainment would be held on a database and individuals would be monitored to assess whether or not improvements were being made and if not, what actions could be taken.

AGREED that the Board would receive an update on progress towards the introduction of a Virtual Headteacher in Middlesbrough at a future meeting.

RECOMMENDED that the Executive be advised to endorse Part Two of the draft Children Looked After Strategy.

MIDDLESBROUGH PLEDGE - UPDATE

As previously reported, work was underway in Middlesbrough to develop a Pledge to Children Looked After. Further sessions had taken place to enable children, young people and adults to discuss the outcomes of the Pledge Development Event held in October 2008. A session was held on 3 February 2009 for children and young people to discuss these outcomes and have an initial attempt at identifying their priorities for inclusion in the Pledge. This session was attended by nine children and young people.

A session for Members of the Corporate Parenting Board had been held on 11 February 2009 to consider the questions put forward by children and young people at the Pledge Development Event.

A further joint session for adults and children and young people was held on 18 February 2009 to enable discussion to take place on identifying common ground to develop the draft Pledge. The outcomes of these sessions were in the process of being written up and a draft Pledge would be developed for circulation and further discussion.

It was noted that unlike other Authorities, Middlesbrough had taken the decision to establish the Pledge before setting up its Children in Care Council. Not all children and young people would be involved in the Children in Care Council but it was hoped that through the process of developing of the Pledge young people might be identified who wished to be Council Members.

In response to a query regarding payment of children and young people for their participation, it was confirmed that on some occasions they would be paid in line with sessional worker's pay or given a gift voucher or a gift. It was confirmed that when the Pledge was finalised there would be some kind of recognition in the form of a reward for all the children and young people involved.

RECOMMENDED that the Executive be advised to note the progress made in developing the Middlesbrough Pledge.