

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

17th SEPTEMBER 2009

**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL
ADOPTION SERVICE – ANNUAL
REPORT FOR 2009**

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

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

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Corporate Parenting Board with
 - (a) information about the activity of Middlesbrough Council Adoption Service during the year 2008/9 and plans for the year 2009/10.
 - (b) the Statement of Purpose for Middlesbrough Council Adoption Service for 2009/10.
 - (c) the Children's Guide to Middlesbrough Council Adoption Service for 2009/10.

BACKGROUND

2. The Local Authority Adoption Services (England) Regulations 2003 and the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services were brought into force on 30th April 2003. One of the requirements of the Regulations and National Minimum Standards is that each adoption service should produce a Statement of Purpose and a Children's Guide to the Adoption Service. There are clear guidelines about what should

be included in these documents. The Regulations also require that, in the case of a local authority, the Statement of Purpose is formally approved by elected members and that it is reviewed, updated and modified at least annually.

3. In previous years, the Adoption Service used to produce an annual report which was a separate document. However there were always several areas where the Statement of Purpose and the Annual Report contained the same material and in order to avoid unnecessary duplication, it was agreed that the annual report should take the form of a Committee Report rather than a stand-alone document.

ACTIVITY OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE DURING 2008/9

4. A summary of the main areas of activity during the year is as follows:

Number of enquires received	110
Number of requests for initial visits	42
Number of applications	16
Number of adopters approved	10
Number of children whose adoption plans were approved	24
Number of children matched with adoptive families	16
Number of adoption orders made	20

5. During the past year, the new structure of the Adoption Team has taken effect. There have been no major staff changes, however a social worker who was on maternity leave has returned to work but on reduced hours. The team benefited from having a final-year student on placement for 9 months.
6. The Adoption Service has had a steady flow of enquiries throughout the year. However, due to workload pressures and the fact that there were a number of approved adopters waiting for placements, the service closed its list to new applicants in February 09 and did not re-open it until June 09.
7. The level of activity relating to adoption plans and placements of children has increased throughout the year, due to the sharp increase in

the number of children looked after. The number of children with adoption plans approved by Panel during 2008/9 was 24, which is the highest level for the last 5 years. A summary of the profiles of these children is given below.

8. In terms of the ages of the 24 children:
 - 13 were under the age of 2 years
 - 9 were aged between 2 years and 5 years
 - 2 were over the age of 5 years
 - the youngest child was 4 months old and the oldest was 9 years.
9. In terms of whether the children needed to be placed with siblings:
 - 13 of the 24 children were single children
 - there were 2 siblings groups of 2 children
 - there was 1 sibling group of 3 children
10. In terms of the ethnicity of the children, 13 were of white British ethnicity and 11 were of mixed ethnicity.
11. The outcomes achieved for these 24 children are as follows:
 - 5 children have been adopted
 - 8 children have been placed for adoption but not yet adopted
 - 8 children are currently matched with prospective adopters but not yet placed
 - 2 children have returned to their birth families
 - there is only 1 child where family finding is still in progress.

These figures illustrate that the Adoption Service is performing well and achieving very positive outcomes for children.

PLANS AND ISSUES FOR 2009/10

12. As already mentioned, in the past year there has been a significant increase in the workload of the Adoption Service. There is already evidence that this trend will continue throughout the year ahead, as monitoring shows that in the period from 1st April to 31st August 2009, there has been a total of 19 children who have had adoption plans approved by Panel. This means that the main issue for the Adoption Service in the year ahead will be to maintain the high standard of service when taking into account a substantial increase in workload.
13. In the circumstances, the capacity to develop new services will be limited, however there are plans to introduce a mentoring scheme for prospective and newly approved adopters. This means that people in assessment will be linked with adopters who have already had children

placed, so that experience can be shared and support offered when necessary.

14. The analysis of the profile of children needing adoption has provided evidence of the challenges that are associated with the provision of an adoption service in 2009 and the sharp contrast between current adoption practice and the 'traditional' view of adoption. The British Association for Adoption & Fostering is holding a national conference in November on the topic of '21st century adoption' which aims to consider the current challenges and how these can be addressed and to reflect on the lessons learnt from research and practice and how we can improve services for the future. A representative from Middlesbrough will be attending this conference.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND CHILDREN'S GUIDE FOR 2009/10

15. The Statement of Purpose for 2009/10 for Middlesbrough Adoption Service is attached as Appendix 1. This document is a requirement of the Local Authority Adoption Services (England) Regulations 2003 and is updated at least once a year. It contains information about the principles, aims and objectives and functions of the Adoption Service, organisational structure, management and staffing details, the services and facilities provided, a summary of the procedures and processes used by the Service in relation to recruitment, assessment, and approval of prospective adopters, details of monitoring systems, a summary of the complaints procedure and contact details for Ofsted.
16. The Children's Guide to Middlesbrough Council Adoption Service for 2009/10 is attached as Appendix 2. This document is also a requirement of the Local Authority Adoption Services (England) Regulations 2003 and is updated at least once a year.
17. The two documents are now being presented to Corporate Parenting Board for the 6th annual review.

OPTION APPRAISAL

18. Not applicable to this piece of work.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

19. There are no immediate financial or legal implications in this report. As the Adoption Service covers the whole of Middlesbrough, this report will be of interest to all Members.

RECOMMENDATIONS

20. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to:
- (a) note the information relating to the activity of Middlesbrough Council Adoption Service.
 - (b) formally approve the Statement of Purpose and the Children's Guide for 2009-10
 - (c) agree that the next annual review of these documents should take place in April 2010 or as soon as possible thereafter.

REASONS

21. This recommendation is supported by the following reasons:
- (a) the Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide to the Adoption Service are documents which are required under Regulations 2 and 3 of the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003
 - (b) the review and updating of these documents is required under Regulation 4 of the same regulations
 - (c) formal approval of these documents is required under standard 1.2 of the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services in England.

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

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