

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Corporate Parenting Board

MIDDLESBROUGH FAMILY PLACEMENT PANEL – ACTIVITY REPORT FOR APRIL TO OCTOBER 2009

Executive Member for Children, Families & Learning: Cllr Mike Carr

Director of Children, Families & Learning: Gill Rollings

10th December 2009

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 1st April to 30th September 2009.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the information relating to the Family Placement Panel.

IF THIS IS A KEY DECISION, WHICH KEY DECISION TEST APPLIES?

3. It is over the financial threshold (£75,000)
It has a significant impact on 2 or more wards
Non Key

DECISION IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE

4. For the purposes of the scrutiny call in procedure this report is

Non-urgent
Urgent report

If urgent, please give full reasons.

BACKGROUND AND EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

5. 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.
6. Middlesbrough Council has established a Family Placement Panel, which 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.
7. The Panel has 10 members and is serviced by officers from the Legal Department, Members' Office and the Family Placement Service. It normally meets fortnightly for half a day.
8. The role of the Family Placement Panel is to consider:
 - applications from prospective adopters
 - plans for children to be placed for adoption
 - proposals to place a specific child or children for adoption by particular prospective adopters
 - reviews of the approval of prospective adopters
 - applications from prospective foster carers
 - reviews of the approval of foster carers
 - plans for children to be placed in long-term foster care
 - proposals to place a specific child or children in a long-term foster placement with particular foster carers.
 - termination of the approval of foster carers.
 - applications for approval as supported lodgings providers

ACTIVITY FROM 1ST APRIL TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2009

9. The Family Placement Panel met on 19 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.
10. The number of items considered in each category during this 6 month period were as follows:

Number of adopters approved	10
Number of children whose adoption plans were approved	19
Number of children whose placements with adoptive parents were approved	13
Number of foster carers approved	1
Number of foster carers who were de-registered	1
Number of children whose long-term fostering plans were approved	13
Number of children whose placements with long-term foster carers were approved	7
Number of foster carer reviews that were considered	22
Number of reports presented for consultation or update on a specific issue	1
Number of reports which were deferred due to concerns over the planning or the quality of the report	12
Number of reports presented for approval of a change of plan for a child	8
Total numbers of items considered	107

11. It will be noted that 1 foster carer was de-registered during this period and the reason for deregistration was related to concerns about the standard of care provided.
12. For comparison purposes, the table overleaf shows items considered by the Panel over an 18 month period. This table clearly shows the increase in the workload of Panel since April 2009, with a 62% increase in the number of items considered when compared with the previous 6 month period. The number of meetings has also increased, although not by the same amount, and many of the meetings have been very lengthy and demanding for Panel members.

	Apr to Sept 08	Oct 08 to Mar 09	Apr to Sept 09
Number of panel meetings held	15	13	19
Number of adopters approved	6	4	10
Number of children whose adoption plans were approved	13	11	19
Number of children whose placements with adoptive parents were approved	10	6	13
Number of foster carers approved	2	0	1
Number of foster carers who were de-registered	2	2	1
Number of children whose long-term fostering plans were approved	1	6	13
Number of children whose placements with long-term foster carers were approved	3	3	7
Number of foster carer reviews that were considered	24	21	22
Number of reports presented for approval of a change of plan for a child	1	6	8
Number of reports presented for consultation or update on a specific issue	1	0	1
Number of reports which were deferred due to concerns over the quality of the reports	9	5	12
Number of supported lodgings approved	0	2	0
Total numbers of items considered	72	66	107

13. It will be noted that the number of new foster carers approved during the last 18 months has been low. On a positive note however, recent recruitment campaigns have resulted in an increased number of applications which are currently being processed and these should result in some new approvals in the next few months.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

14. All social care services are delivered within a framework of anti-discriminatory practice and there are no specific issues arising from the information presented within this report.

OPTION APPRAISAL

15. Not applicable to this piece of work.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

16. 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.

RECOMMENDATION

17. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the information relating to the Family Placement Panel.

REASONS

18. 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

19. 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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