

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on 21 January 2010.

PRESENT: Councillor McIntyre (Chair), Councillors Brunton, Dryden, P Rogers and Rooney

OFFICERS: L Carling, V Flynn, S Little, M McDermott, C Ring, N Pocklington and J Young

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Josh (Young Person)

****APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Biswas, Budd, Carr and B Thompson

****DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**** MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2009 were taken as read and approved as a true record.

RESOLUTION AND REUNIFICATION RESOURCE

The Family Resource Team Manager presented a report to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the development and activity of the Resolution and Reunification Resource during the period May 2009 to January 2010.

The Resolution and Reunification Resource was a partnership project between the Family Resource Team, other safeguarding services and Five Rivers. The purpose of the Resource was to provide a short-term crisis intervention service for families, utilising an existing residential children's home, Rosecroft, with the aim of preventing children and young people accessing the care system on a long-term basis. Middlesbrough Children and Young People's Plan identified reducing the number of Looked After Children as a key strategic priority and the Resolution and Reunification Resource had the potential to contribute directly to this priority.

Families First was an existing team within Middlesbrough Council that successfully utilised a short-term model of crisis intervention, known as the Option 2 model. The intention was that this model would form the basis of the intervention undertaken by staff within the Family Resource Team and Five Rivers.

Referrals for the Resolution and Reunification Resource were currently made by social workers to the Family Resource Team and were ratified by a Service Manager via the Service Provision Panel. If there was a vacancy and the referral was appropriate, there was a 48-hour planning period prior to admission. Two workers from the Family Resource Team, supported by staff at Rosecroft, would then work intensively with the young person and their parent(s).

The aim was that staff from the Family Resource Team would have daily contact with the family during a period of up to six weeks. Work with the family would involve supporting them in identifying their beliefs, resources and strengths. This information would then be used and built upon to formulate realistic goals for all family members with clear behavioural outcomes. The aim of each intervention was to return the young person home within six weeks. Sixty-nine percent of families who had received this intensive intervention had made enough behavioural changes in six weeks to enable young people to be returned home successfully.

Details of the numbers of referrals and admissions and the age and gender of young people admitted to the Resolution and Resource between May 2009 and January 2010 were presented in graphical form in the submitted report. It was noted that there was an even balance between

boys and girls, with the prominent age group being 14-16 year olds. Of the 17 referrals made, only 2 could not be assisted, as spaces in the unit were unavailable.

It was confirmed that the unit worked with the whole family, identifying strengths and problems, looking at changing their behaviour, so that problems and issues could be resolved. The distance between family members, when the young person was moved to Rosecroft, meant that differences could be resolved and avoid the friction that often arose when young people were growing up. It was noted that an increase in capacity was a possibility as it had been agreed with Five Rivers that the unit could be expanded to include one further bed space. However, due to staffing and resource levels, the unit would remain unchanged for the present time. The scheme was only a pilot at the moment and there was no waiting list.

Future plans included establishing a Strategic Board to build on the early successes of the project and ensure its continued development. It was envisaged that children and young people would have the opportunity to participate in this development. Families First would be commissioned to deliver training in the Option 2 crisis intervention model to both Five Rivers and the Family Resource Team. The Option 2 model would be used to develop an evidence-based model of intervention that was specific to the Resolution and Reunification Resource. Evaluation tools would be further developed and would reflect this model of intervention. An economic analysis would be undertaken to quantify the savings that this resource represented in respect of preventing young people entering the care system on a long-term basis. Work would be undertaken to increase the profile of the resource both locally and nationally.

Future plans indicated that a meeting to establish the membership of the Strategic Board was set for early February 2010. Whether young people would be included on the board, of just consulted for their views, was yet to be decided.

A young person, Josh, was present and he had benefited from the scheme at Rosecroft. He informed the Board that his family problems had been resolved by the intervention of officers at Rosecroft and, if the need ever arose again, he would not hesitate to take advantage of its services.

Family group conferences could be held at any neutral venue where the family could be gathered around a table, where the discussion could be flexible and which began at the stage before the young person had to move out of home. The aim was to get all parties round a table and talk out their problems, with time for breaks and respite.

RECOMMENDED that the Executive be advised to note the information relating to the Resolution and Reunification Resource.

(At this point, Josh, M McDermott, C Ring and L Carling left the meeting).

PATHWAYS TEAM ANNUAL REPORT

The Team Manager presented the Annual Report for Middlesbrough Council's Leaving Care Service for the Year 2009. A copy of the Annual Report was attached as Appendix 1 to the submitted report. Middlesbrough Pathways Team provided a service for young people in care or leaving care from age 16 to 24.

The Annual Report provided the following information:

- The aims and objectives of the service.
- The services and facilities provided by the Pathways team to young people.
- The staffing of the Leaving Care service during 2009.
- Achievements and development during 2009, including Making a Positive Contribution, Staying Safe, Achieving Economic Wellbeing, Being Healthy, Enjoy and Achieve.
- Developments and Issues for 2010.

The Team Manager highlighted some of the many activities and developments during 2009 that were detailed in the report under the five Every Child Matters outcomes and in the discussion that followed, the following points were highlighted:

- There had been a positive feedback letter from the Ofsted inspectors praising the young people's contribution to the Ofsted Inspection.
- The Pledge was now mostly completed, with additional work required to ensure that it reflected what Middlesbrough Council undertook for Looked After Children, especially younger ones.
- There was a lot of attention given to healthy eating, keeping fit (using Wii Fit, which provided a lot of fun) and Healthy Cooking on a Budget, with drop-in sessions provided.
- The supported lodging scheme was very successful and three more providers had recently been approved and added to the list.
- The 'Crash Pad' facility had also been very successful and allowed young people time within a safe living environment to secure more permanent housing.
- A PCT nurse had been involved in providing therapy and counselling where required, although it was felt that the PCT could be more supportive and pro-active.
- The LAC service currently had two young people attending university. Two other young people had also been involved in the university as social work students were required to be interviewed by and passed by the young people, before they could complete their 'Fitness to Practice' module. The leader of the course had been very impressed with the YP interviewers.
- Mental health support was also available to YP, with a flexible approach, and the team had a Self-Esteem group work programme for YP, aiming to support their mental health, with a Looked After Children nurse, a personal adviser who was a qualified CPN and a social worker. However, LAC often did not want formal therapy.
- A visit had been undertaken to a children's home in Poland and the findings of the successful visit were reported.
- A number of discount X4 cards had been purchased from Leisure Services, linked with an incentive to YP to actively engage in education, training or employment, and these cards were used on a regular basis.
- The Cycle Centre had also offered training on how to build and refurbish bikes and successful participants were allowed to keep their bikes.
- LAC who were not from the UK was referred to. It was noted that it was often difficult to ascertain the true age of asylum seekers, as some claimed to be under 18 years of age when they were older. Training was now available to social workers and others, at a national level, and as assessment would go to court, it was very important to have the correct age, so the case would be presented to the correct court.
- Dental checks were also part of the assessment, however, paediatricians would only estimate an age to within 2 years, so those YP in mid-late teens could be placed in the wrong category. A lot of research had been undertaken on age assessment and how to carry it out.

The Chair thanked the officer for her presentation to the Board.

RECOMMENDED that the Executive be advised to note the information provided relating to the Leaving Care Service.

CARE MATTERS MINISTERIAL STOCKTAKE

A report was presented to advise the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the recent ministerial stocktake of progress in relation to Care Matters.

Since the implications of the Care Matters proposals for social work practice and the delivery of services in Middlesbrough were considered in September 2007, the Board had received a number of reports and presentations. The Corporate Parenting Board had also played a key role in the development of Middlesbrough's Pledge to Children Looked After. Progress in relation to Care Matters was reported to Central Government in Autumn 2009.

In Autumn 2009, the Government collated information for all local authorities to monitor progress and produced a report that highlighted the following:

- There had been steady progress in improving outcomes for children in care.
- There was a need to go much further and faster.
- There was a need for strong leadership by Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children's Services, as corporate parents, to raise all local authorities to the standards of the best local authorities.
- There needed to be a change of culture in every local authority so that children were listened to more on all key issues.

For each aspect of Care Matters, the report identified what the Government had already done, what worked well and priorities for action in 2010. A summary of the key issues and the implications for Middlesbrough was provided in the submitted report.

Overall, Middlesbrough had benefited from the proactive approach taken in relation to Every Child Matters and Care Matters, in that work had already been undertaken in respect of most of the key issues raised in the stocktake report. Careful consideration was needed to ensure that new statutory guidance was implemented appropriately. Further progress on Care Matters would be reported to the Corporate Parenting Board in due course.

RECOMMENDED that the Executive be advised to note the information relating to the Care Matters Ministerial Stocktake Report 2009.