

# MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

## Corporate Parenting Board

<b>MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION</b>
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**Executive Member for Children, Families & Learning: Cllr Mike Carr**

**Director of Children, Families & Learning: Gill Rollings**

**4<sup>th</sup> March 2010**

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### **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Corporate Parenting Board with information on how children and young people looked after are supported to meet the aims of the Every Child Matters outcome, 'Make a Positive Contribution'.

### **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the information relating to Make a Positive Contribution.

### **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. Members will be aware that within the Every Child Matters outcome, 'Make a Positive Contribution', there are five aims. This report will outline developments within each of the five aims over the past year. The aims are that children and young people will:

- Engage in decision-making and support community and environment
  - Engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school
  - Develop positive relationships and choose not to bully or discriminate
  - Develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges
  - Develop enterprising behaviour
6. This outcome is supported by a range of legislation and guidance, including the Children Act 1989, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Leaving Care Act (2000), the Adoption and Children Act 2004, Care Matters: Time for Change (2007) and, most recently, the Children and Young Person's Act 2008. Locally, the Corporate Parenting Policy and the Getting Involved Strategy (both revised in 2008) reflect the Council's commitment to supporting children and young people looked after in making a positive contribution. Relevant promises made in the local authority Pledge to children Looked After are included throughout this report.

### **Engage in decision-making and support community and environment**

7. In relation to decision-making, children and young people were fundamental to the development of the Pledge, which was approved by Executive in July 2009. The Pledge includes the promises:
- "We will make sure you can talk to the adults who make decisions that affect you."
- "We will make sure that there is a way to make things happen for you."
- "We will make sure you have a chance to influence decisions about any issues that matter to you".
8. Children and young people continue to be directly involved in their individual assessment, care planning and review processes. However, work is currently underway to ensure that the Pledge is embedded in care planning processes. This is likely to lead to some changes in those processes and the production of new documentation and guidance for social work staff, based on the views of children and young people.
9. During the year, young people have been involved in the recruitment and selection of staff at every level from front line staff to senior managers. Young people have also taken part in the initial 'Fitness for Practice' screening process for new social work students at Teesside University.
10. At a strategic level, children and young people looked after participate in an advisory group that has been working with members of the Children's Trust to review the priorities set out in the Children and Young People's Plan. Young people have also been involved in a range of national initiatives, such as a meeting with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and the Care Leavers Benchmarking Forum that will impact on service delivery across the country. The establishment of a Children in Care Council will further strengthen their involvement in the strategic development of services at a local level.

## Engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school

11. The ratio of children looked after, aged over 10, with regard to the number of children given a final warning, reprimand or convicted during 2008-2009 continued to be very low at 0.02 of the total. The report of the Youth Offending Service to this meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board will address this aim in more detail.

## Develop positive relationships and choose not to bully or discriminate

12. The local authority's Pledge to children looked after emphasises the importance of positive relationships and bullying. It includes promises that:
  - "We will try very hard to make sure that you live with people who care **about** you and care **for** you."
  - "We will help you to keep in touch with your family."
  - "We will help you to make friends and build relationships."
  - "We will support you if you feel that you are being treated unfairly."
  - "We will support individuals and groups to deal with bullying, wherever it happens."
13. There are many adults in a child's life, with whom positive relationships might be developed. In addition to family members, this includes foster carers, social workers and school nurses, designated nurse, reviewing officers, all of whom can support children and young people in making a positive contribution. Children's capacity to develop positive relationships with their peers may be disrupted by placement moves and by the different nature of their life experiences.
14. New guidance on 'Promoting the emotional health of children and young people (NI 50 guidance for Children's Trust Partnerships)' was issued by the DCSF in January 2010. This guidance identifies children looked after as one of a number of groups of vulnerable children who are more likely than their peers to experience emotional difficulties.
15. The Tell Us survey is to be used to measure emotional health by asking children to rate themselves in relation to the following statements:
  1. I have one or more good friends.
  2. When I'm worried about something, I can talk to my mum or dad.
  3. When I'm worried about something, I can talk to my friends.
  4. When I'm worried about something, I can talk to an adult other than my mum or dad.The possible responses are: true; neither true nor not true; not true; don't know. National Indicator 50 will be calculated as the percentage of children with 'good relationships'. This is defined as the percentage of children who answered 'true' to statement 1 **and** 'true' to **at least two** of statements 2,3, & 4. These responses will be regarded as a proxy for children and young people's emotional health.

16. In addition to the above indicator, an annual return is submitted to the DCSF in relation to the completion of a 'Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire' for children looked after aged 4 to under 17 who have been looked after for more than 12 months. At present, this return relates simply to the numbers that have been completed but it is likely that additional requirements will be added over time. Further work will be required to ensure that the local authority can respond positively to supporting children and young people looked after in making positive relationships.
17. Issues relating to bullying in schools are monitored via the Personal Education Plan and are dealt with on an individual basis. Schools address bullying in school in a variety of ways, including through the SEAL programme and Playground Buddies. The 'Power Pack Anti-bullying Survival Guide', produced by the Who Cares? Trust, has just been distributed to all children and young people looked after. Work is also underway to develop additional training for staff and carers on recognising and being proactive in dealing with bullying. The development of sessions for children and young people to build self-esteem and resilience is also being explored.

### **Develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges**

18. The Pledge says:  
"We will believe in you and support you to do well in education, training and employment."
19. Twelve children and young people looked after were involved in 'Playing for Success', which provided an opportunity for them to develop their literacy skills, social skills and build their self-confidence through group work and other activities. This programme was targeted towards children in Year 6 who were about to make the transition to a new school. There were also some children who were in the process of returning home to their parents and their involvement in Playing for Success supported that process. Most of the children who participated attended an awards event at the Riverside Stadium, which was also attended by Members of the Corporate Parenting Board.
20. Opportunities to take part in confidence-building activities are identified through their Personal Education Plan (PEP) and through the Pathway Plan for older young people. Children looked after are accessing extended schools provision in their local area, usually via their school, alongside their peers. Children take part in a wide range of activities according to personal interests and preferences; examples include swimming lessons, after school clubs, Brownies, stable management, music lessons and Cadets. Take up of extra-curricular activities is monitored and challenged via each child's PEP. It should be noted that for some children, arrangements for contact with family members does impact on their ability to take part in after school activities.
21. The provision of support by dedicated Connexions Personal Advisers has promoted very robust progression planning processes, linked to key stage transition planning. The Connexions Personal Advisers who are linked with the Pathways Team supported the delivery of the Preparation for Independence course, which is OCN accredited.

22. The Pathways Team has developed and delivered a self-esteem group work programme for young people, aimed at supporting their positive mental health. In partnership with the Prince's Trust, the team enabled three young people to undergo accredited training as Peer Mentors.

### **Develop enterprising behaviour**

23. The Pledge says:  
*"We will encourage you to think about your dreams and achieve your ambitions."*
24. The Connexions Personal Advisers have assumed Connexions casework responsibility for all leaving care young people and their work has concentrated on undertaking individual work with young people aimed at assisting them to access education, employment and training.
25. The Pathways Team continues to support and assist young people in or leaving care to enhance their employability opportunities. With the support and commitment of colleagues within Mouchel Employee Services department, young people have been offered a range of opportunities including the delivery, through Faulk Nutec, of emergency first aid training to young people.
26. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has commissioned the National Care Advisory Service to develop a 'From Care 2 Work Scheme'. It is based around the principles of our employability scheme, with a national programme of work experience and career opportunities being provided to care leavers. In addition to national opportunities for work placements, Middlesbrough has also signed up to the scheme and the team is currently developing a work plan within the council and with partner agencies.

### **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

27. 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**

28. Not applicable to this piece of work.

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

29. There are no immediate financial or legal implications arising from this report. This report will be of interest to all elected Members in their role as corporate parents.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

30. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the information relating to Make a Positive Contribution.

## **REASONS**

29. It is important that Members are aware of the steps taken to ensure that children and young people looked after are able to 'Make a Positive Contribution'.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

30. The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Middlesbrough Council Leaving Care Service Annual Report For 2009
- 'Promoting the emotional health of children and young people - NI 50 guidance for Children's Trust Partnerships' DCSF, January 2010

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