

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on 4 March 2010.

PRESENT: Councillor McIntyre (Chair), Councillors Brunton, Biswas, Carr, Rooney and B Thompson.

OFFICERS: S Harker, C Kendrick, S Little, N Pocklington and J Wilson.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: S Deehan, South Tees Youth Offending Service.

****APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Budd, Dryden and P Rogers and B Simpson.

****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 21 January 2010 were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION

The Children's Participation Officer presented a report to provide the Board with information on how children and young people looked after were supported to meet the aims of the Every Child Matters Outcome, "Make a Positive Contribution".

There were five aims within the Outcome which were:

- 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.

The Children's Participation Officer gave an update of developments under each heading and highlighted the following:

- In relation to decision-making, children and young people had been fundamental to the development of The Pledge, which was approved by the Executive in July 2009.
- Children and young people continued to be directly involved in their individual assessment, care planning and review processes. A group of young people had volunteered to work alongside front line staff to make the Pledge meaningful in relation to their care plans and progress on this would be reported to a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.
- Young people had been involved in the recruitment and selection of staff at every level from front line staff to senior managers.
- Children and young people looked after had participated in an advisory group working with members of the Children's Trust to review the priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan.
- The 'Power Pack Anti-bullying Survival Guide' produced by the Who Cares? Trust was being distributed to all children and young people looked after. This was an attractive resource that provided tips, hints, advice and useful telephone numbers.
- New guidance had been issued for Children's Trust Partnerships on promoting the health of children and young people and identified children looked after as one of a number of groups of vulnerable children who were more likely than their peers to experience emotional difficulties.
- The Tell Us Survey would be used to measure young people's feelings around emotional health.

- Several Members of the Corporate Parenting Board attended an award ceremony for the Playing for Success initiative held at the Riverside Stadium. The initiative gave children and young people, including those looked after, to engage in team building opportunities.
- Connexions Personal Advisers had assumed Connexions casework responsibility for all leaving care young people and their work had concentrated on undertaking individual work with young people aimed at assisting them to access education, employment and training.

RECOMMENDED that the Executive be advised to note the information relating to Make a Positive Contribution.

YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE – YOUTH JUSTICE BOARD INSPECTION AND UPDATE ON CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

A report was presented to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with a summary of findings from the 2010 Youth Justice Board Inspection and to give an update on the Youth Offending Service's work with children looked after in Middlesbrough.

South Tees Youth Offending Service (YOS) was a multi-agency service established to prevent and reduce offending by children and young people aged 10 to 17 years across the boroughs of Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. The South Tees YOS worked closely with partners from Police, Probation, Children Families and Learning, Health, Safe in Tees Valley and the Youth Service, as well as a number of voluntary organisations.

In October 2009 South Tees YOS was subject to a Core Case Inspection which included examination of 78 case files, 40 of which were from Middlesbrough. The report was published in January 2010 and provided percentage scores for each of the "practice criteria", essentially indicating how often each aspect of work met the level of quality the inspectors were looking for.

The focus was principally on Public Protection and Safeguarding aspects of the work in each case sample. The three main areas of judgement were Safeguarding, Public Protection Risk of Harm and Public Protection Likelihood of Re-Offending. The percentage scores for each area were detailed in the submitted report and the headline comment was that moderate improvement was required in all three areas for South Tees. A copy of the South Tees YOS Inspection Report was tabled for Members' information.

The overall results for Middlesbrough were significantly higher than those for Redcar due to a variety of issues which had been addressed within the Improvement Plan. A Post Inspection Improvement Action Plan had been developed to address each of the identified areas, and this had been approved by the Youth Justice Board.

There were no specific concerns or recommendations in relation to children looked after and issues around this vulnerable group continued to be monitored. In relation to the joint target around children look after entering the criminal justice system, this currently stood at 2.1% which was well within target. There were some concerns about the use of Reprimands and Final Warnings following incidents in school settings and this was being monitored closely.

The use of restorative processes as an alternative to criminalising young people whose behaviour in a residential or educational setting was particularly challenging. This mirrored work undertaken some time ago working in local children's homes, which was welcomed and proved to be successful in reducing the numbers entering the criminal justice system from that route.

RECOMMENDED that the Executive be advised to note the information relating to the Youth Justice Board Inspection and issues for Children Looked After.

OFSTED INSPECTION OF MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL ADOPTION SERVICE IN NOVEMBER 2009

A report was presented to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with the findings and outcomes of the most recent OFSTED Inspection of Middlesbrough's Adoption Service. The final inspection report was received on 26 November 2009 and gave an outcome of 'satisfactory'. The outcome was challenged successfully and a revised outcome of 'good' was received on 20

January 2010. A copy of the inspection report was attached at Appendix 2 to the submitted report.

The service was rated as 'good' in the areas of protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe, helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do, and organisation. The service was rated as 'satisfactory' in helping children making a positive contribution. The key issue relating to this area was that children's life story work and the permanence reports written for presentation to the Family Placement Panel were inconsistent in terms of timeliness and quality. Given the high numbers of children looked after and the existing staff capacity problems, the inspector saw "little prospect of improvement without increased input". A bid had been made for additional funds to employ another full time member of staff.

All three statutory requirements which needed addressing from the last inspection and each of the fifteen good practice recommendations had been met. The processes for screening, preparation and assessment of prospective adopters was highlighted as was the dedication and skill of staff. In a climate of constant pressure and media criticism of social work practitioners this was particularly pleasing.

There were eight good practice recommendations from the inspection and these formed the basis of an action plan that would be implemented across the service during 2010. Each Team Manager, and other relevant parties within Children's Safeguarding Services had received a copy of the inspection report and action plan to ensure that there was an inclusive approach to implementing the required changes.

RECOMMENDED that the Executive be advised to note the information relating to the Adoption Service Inspection Report.

OFSTED INSPECTION OF MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL FOSTERING SERVICE IN NOVEMBER 2009

A report was presented to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with the findings and outcomes of the most recent OFSTED Inspection of Middlesbrough's Fostering Service. The final inspection report was received on 26 November 2009 and gave an outcome of 'good'. A copy of the inspection report was attached at Appendix 1 to the submitted report.

The Service was rated as 'good' in the following areas:

- Helping children to be healthy.
- Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe.
- Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do.
- Helping children make a positive contribution.
- Achieving economic wellbeing.
- Organisation.

This was an improvement on the previous inspection and the service's promotion of equality and diversity was also rated as 'good'.

The service had addressed each of the ten recommendations made at the last inspection and had also made the following improvements:

- Arrangements for matching children with foster carers.
- Development in arranging placements and information sharing with Independent Fostering Agencies.
- Recording.
- Management, training and support of foster carers.
- Work to recruit more foster carers.

There were seven recommendations to secure future improvement which formed the basis of an action plan to be implemented across the service in 2010. Each Team Manager within Safeguarding Services, along with colleagues in Human Resources, had received a copy of the inspection report and the associated plan, to ensure that the required changes were owned and implemented.

RECOMMENDED that the Executive be advised to note the information relating to the Fostering Service Inspection Report.