

# MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

## Corporate Parenting Board

|   |
|---|
| <p><b>Middlesbrough Council Adoption Service<br/>Annual Report For 2010</b></p> |
|---|

**Executive Member for Children Families & Learning: Mike Carr**

**Executive Director of Children, Families and Learning: Gill Rollings**

**Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2010**

---

### 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 2009/10 and plans for the year 2010/11.
  - (b) the Statement of Purpose for Middlesbrough Council Adoption Service for 2010/11.
  - (c) the Children's Guide to Middlesbrough Council Adoption Service for 2010/11.

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

2. 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 2010-11
  - (c) agree that the next annual review of these documents should take place in April 2011 or as soon as possible thereafter.

### 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

|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            |

### DECISION IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE

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

Non-urgent  
Urgent report

|                                     |
|-------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            |

## BACKGROUND AND EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

5. The Local Authority Adoption Services (England) Regulations 2003 and the National Minimum Standards for Local Authority Adoption Services were brought into force on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2003.
6. 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.
7. 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.

## ACTIVITY OF THE ADOPTION SERVICE DURING 2009/10

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

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Number of enquires received                           | 78 |
| Number of requests for initial visits                 | 32 |
| Number of applications                                | 8  |
| Number of adopters approved                           | 14 |
| Number of children whose adoption plans were approved | 27 |
| Number of children matched with adoptive families     | 21 |
| Number of adoption orders made                        | 10 |

9. During the past year, the new structure of the Adoption Team has taken effect. There have been significant staff changes, with two social worker's leaving the team and a delay in appointing to their posts. The team benefited from having a final-year student on placement for 9 months.
10. The Adoption Service has had a steady flow of enquiries throughout the year. However, there was less activity in terms of enquiries, applications and approvals. A contributing factor was that the service closed its list to new applicants in February 09 and did not re-open it until June 09. This decision related to having a number of approved adopters already waiting for placements.
11. 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 Family Placement Panel during 2009/10 was 27, which is the highest level for the last 5 years. A summary of the profiles of these children is given below.

12. In terms of age, of the 27 children:
  - 11 were under the age of 2 years
  - 12 were aged between 2 years and 5 years
  - 4 were over the age of 5 years
  - the youngest child was 2 months old and the oldest was 9 years.
13. In terms of whether the children needed to be placed with siblings:
  - 11 of the 27 children were single children
  - there were 3 siblings groups of 2 children
  - there were 2 sibling groups of 3 children
  - there was 1 sibling group of 4 children
14. In terms of the ethnicity of the children, 26 were White British and 1 was of mixed ethnicity.
15. The outcomes achieved for these 27 children are as follows:
  - 5 children have been adopted
  - 5 children have been placed for adoption but not yet adopted
  - 5 children are currently matched with prospective adopters but not yet placed
  - 11 children where family finding is still in progress.
  - 1 child ultimately placed in a long term fostering placement

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

## **PLANS AND ISSUES FOR 2010/11**

16. As already mentioned, in the past year there has been a significant increase in the workload of the Adoption Service. Evidence from the past 2 years shows an increasing upward trend of children who have adoption plans. There is already evidence that this trend will continue throughout the year ahead, as monitoring shows that in the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2010, there has been a total of 11 children who have had adoption plans approved by Family Placement 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.
17. In the circumstances, the capacity to develop new services will be limited, however we have introduced 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.
18. The service will continue to develop post adoption services, working closely with After Adoption (an independent agency).

19. The service will also encourage birth families to maintain contact with their children. The Assistant Team Manager (Adoption) will offer to visit all birth families where the plan is for adoption and explain about the processes, contact and Post Box arrangements.
20. A potential pressure on the service might arise where there may not be enough adopters for the children who need an adoptive placement. A preparation group was planned for June 2010, however there were no applicants to attend. It is anticipated that a group will run in September 2010 and there are plans in place to run a focused recruitment campaign during the summer.

## **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND CHILDREN'S GUIDE FOR 2010/11**

21. The Statement of Purpose for 2010/11 for Middlesbrough Adoption Service is attached as Appendix 1. As required by Regulations, this document contains information about:
  - the principles, aims, 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.
22. The Children's Guide to Middlesbrough Council Adoption Service for 2009/10 is attached as Appendix 2. The content of this document is also set out in Regulations.
23. Both documents must be updated annually and are now being presented to Corporate Parenting Board for the 7th annual review.

## **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

24. 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/RISK ASSESSMENT**

25. Not applicable to this piece of work.

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

26. There are no immediate financial or legal implications in this report. There are no specific ward implications as the Adoption Service covers the whole of Middlesbrough.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

27. 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 2010-11
  - (c) agree that the next annual review of these documents should take place in April 2011 or as soon as possible thereafter.

## REASONS

28. 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

29. No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

**AUTHOR:** Jane Young, Interim Family Placement Manager

**TEL NO:** 01642 201960

---

*Address: Middlesbrough Teaching & Learning Centre, Cargo Fleet Lane,  
Middlesbrough, TS3 8PE*

*Website: <http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk>*