

# MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

## Corporate Parenting Board

<p><b>Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service Annual Report For 2010</b></p>
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**Executive Member for Children Families & Learning: Mike Carr**

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

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

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

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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### DECISION IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE

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

Non-urgent  
Urgent report

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## BACKGROUND AND EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

5. The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services were brought into force on 1st April 2002. One of the requirements of the Regulations and National Minimum Standards is that each fostering service should produce a Statement of Purpose and a Children's Guide to the Fostering Service. There are clear guidelines about what should be included in these documents. 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 FOSTERING SERVICE DURING 2009/10

6. A summary of the main areas of activity is as follows:

Number of enquires received	170
Number of requests for initial visits	65
Number of applications	26
Number of foster carers approved	3
Number of foster carers de-registered	8
Total number of approved foster carers on 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2010	80
Number of children in foster care on 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2009	107
Number of children whose long-term fostering plans were approved	5
Number of children matched with long-term foster carers	1

7. Over the last 12 months the Fostering Service has experienced a period of staff shortage due to two members having extended periods of illness and one vacancy arising from the post holder leaving the team. Therefore, the team has not been fully staffed for six months of the year but from April 2010, the team has been back to full capacity. Despite staffing pressures, the team has run 4 fostering preparation groups and is currently meeting its recruitment targets for new carers. However, due to the number of carers who have either retired or been deregistered from the service, this increased activity has not had the desired impact in terms of numbers of placements.

8. The Fostering Service provides a programme of post-approval training for registered foster carers and during 2009/10, the topics for the training sessions were:

- ◆ Allegations against carers – May 2009
- ◆ Promoting Recovery from trauma – May 2009
- ◆ Recording – June 2009
- ◆ Safeguarding Children and Young People – June 2009
- ◆ Social and Emotional Aspects of learning – September 09
- ◆ Supporting children moving on – November 09
- ◆ Caring for Vulnerable babies- November 09

Foster carers also have opportunities to attend courses that are part of Middlesbrough Children, Families & Learning in-house training programme, those run by the Local Safeguarding Children Board, and some run by external organisations. Several foster carers took advantage of these opportunities during the year.

9. In addition to formal training, the Fostering Service provides monthly workshops aimed at supporting carers to complete the CWDC standards. An additional support group is provided for the sons and daughters of foster carers and this has been re-launched in conjunction with Fostering Network, a national organisation for foster carers.

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

10. A key task during the coming year will be the continued implementation of a new set of standards issued by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC), relating to the training and support of foster carers. All fostering services are required to comply with these standard by 2011 and compliance will be monitored by Ofsted as part of the inspection of the Fostering Service.
11. The implementation of these standards means that the Fostering Service has to review the way it provides training and support to foster carers. This process has already started and will continue during the year ahead. One of the major changes is in the way the Fostering Service delivers training to foster carers. The service will no longer provide a programme of 4 group training sessions per year but instead will offer a wider variety of topics with more flexibility in terms of the timing and the method of delivery. The training will be targeted to the individual needs of the foster carer and each carer will have a Personal Development Plan.
12. There is a significant cost associated with the implementation of the CWDC standards, as the organisation and provision of the necessary training and support will cause pressure in terms of staff time and financial resources.
13. Recruitment and retention of foster carers is likely to remain a challenge in the year ahead, despite the recent positive trend. Recruitment of foster carers is a competitive market and although there has been considerable progress in making Middlesbrough more attractive in terms of allowances, there is no room for complacency. In the last six months Middlesbrough has collaborated with Redcar and Cleveland to facilitate preparation training for foster carers. This has allowed

the opportunity to maximise scarce staffing resources and reduce the time prospective carers are having to wait for a group. We anticipate further collaboration in the coming year, which may include other neighbouring authorities.

14. Middlesbrough has an active role in the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Pilot - Tees Valley which aims to explore whether efficiency saving can be made by collaborative working in recruitment and preparation of foster carers.
15. Work on developing a new payments database, which is compatible with SWIFT and ICS, has continued during the last year, and it is now planned to be implemented in September 2010.

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

16. The Statement of Purpose for 2010/11 for Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service is attached as Appendix 1. As required by Regulations, this document contains information about:
  - the principles, aims and objectives of the Fostering Service
  - standards of care
  - management structure and staffing details
  - number of carers and number of children placed
  - number of complaints and their outcomes
  - the services and facilities provided and
  - a summary of the procedures and processes used by the Service in relation to recruitment, assessment, approval support, training and review of foster carers.
17. The Children's Guide to Middlesbrough Council Adoption Service for 2010/11 is attached as Appendix 2. The content of this document is also set out in Regulations.
18. Both documents must be updated annually and are now being presented to Corporate Parenting Board for the 8th annual review.

## **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

19. 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**

20. Not applicable to this piece of work.

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

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

## RECOMMENDATIONS

22. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to:
- a) note the information relating to the activity of Middlesbrough Council Fostering 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

23. This recommendation is supported by the following reasons:
- (a) the Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide to the Fostering Service are documents which are required under Regulations 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002
  - (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 1.3 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

**AUTHOR: Jane Young, Interim Family Placement Manager**  
**TEL NO: 01642 201960**

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*Address: Middlesbrough Teaching & Learning Centre, Cargo Fleet Lane,  
Middlesbrough, TS3 8PE*  
*Website: <http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk>*