

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was held on 18 January 2011.

PRESENT: Councillor Carr (Chair), Councillors Brunton, Budd, Dryden, P Rogers, Rooney, B Thompson and J A Walker.

OFFICERS: A Dawson, S Harker, J Keelty, C Kendrick, N Pocklington and J Wilson.

****ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** A Brown, South Tees Youth Offending Service.
B Simpson.

****APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors Junier and McIntyre.

****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 11 November 2010 were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) STATISTICAL UPDATE

A report was provided to update the Corporate Parenting Board with statistical information regarding children looked after by Middlesbrough Council. The number of LAC had shown signs of stability moving into the second half of 2010/11 with a small but consistent reduction between August and October 2010. At the end of October 2010 there were 345 children looked after by Middlesbrough Council. This represented a 6% increase on March 2010 compared to the 19% increase experienced between March 2009 and March 2010.

Comparative data for 2009/2010 indicated that the number of LAC per ten thousand 0-17 year olds in Middlesbrough (103), was significantly above the averages for England (58), the North East (69) and Middlesbrough's group of statistical neighbours (84), which all showed year on year increases. Whilst Middlesbrough's rate was not the highest amongst the group, it did show the greatest increase year on year; 19% compared with an average increase of 7%.

The percentage of LAC who had three or more separate placements during the year had improved slightly in 2009/2010 from 12.4% to 11.7%. Performance for the first two quarters of 2010/2011 was above target, indicating a reduced number of young people in this category by the year-end. It was highlighted that whilst three or more placements was a good performance indicator to work to in terms of maintaining stability, sometimes emergency placements had to be used until a more positive placement was found.

Comparative data for 2009/2010 indicated that Middlesbrough's performance was worse than regional (10.4%) and national (10.9%) averages. Middlesbrough's performance was also above average for its group of statistical neighbours (11.0%) with Middlesbrough placed at the mid-point for the range of results amongst the group.

On a positive note, the percentage of LAC who had been living in the same placement for at least two years dropped below national (68%) and statistical neighbour (65%) averages for the first time in five years. Performance in the first half of 2010/2011 was at a similar level, which indicated that the target to be in line with statistical neighbours by the year-end was achievable.

The percentage of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation remained above both the national (90.3%) and statistical neighbour (94.5%) comparators at 95.2% in 2009/2010. The percentage of care leavers in employment, education or training at 66.7% was well above the national (62.1%) and statistical neighbour (60.8%) comparators for 2009/2010.

Performance in the first half of 2010/2011 was below the 2009/2010 outturn figure, but above performance levels for the same period in 2009/2010.

It was highlighted that there was regular liaison with Team Managers to discuss performance in relation to the numbers of LAC and explore the issues behind the headline statistics.

RECOMMENDED that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the statistical update on children looked after by the Local Authority.

INTEGRATED YOUTH SUPPORT SERVICE (IYSS) SUPPORT FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS

A report was presented to update the Corporate Parenting Board on the support provided by the Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS) for Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers. The IYSS came into existence on 1 April 2010, when the former Connexions and Youth Services joined together to offer an enhanced service to all 13-19 year olds. The work of the IYSS was underpinned by the Youth Offer, which was launched for all young people including LAC and Care Leavers in November 2010.

IYSS provided a dedicated service for LAC and Care Leavers in Middlesbrough. This provision directly contributed to all the outcomes of Every Child Matters, particularly Achieve Economic Well-Being. IYSS aimed to support LAC and Care Leavers in their progression into adult life. A successful outcome was that LAC and Care Leavers should be engaged in either education, employment or training until the age of 19 and economically independent by the age of 21.

Each LAC was offered Tier 1, intensive support from a Personal Adviser and was able to receive the highest frequency of quality intervention from the service. This equated to a minimum three hours of inter-personal contacts or six interventions in any twelve-month period. In reality this was often exceeded, in order to deal with the complex needs of LAC. A partnership agreement, which was reviewed regularly and re-issued annually, was in place between the IYSS and Middlesbrough's LAC and Care Leavers Services and enabled dedicated and specialist Personal Adviser support to be delivered to LAC and Care Leavers.

Senior Managers from IYSS were actively involved in supporting the recently launched Virtual School. A Manager was present at the Virtual School Steering Group meetings and reported IYSS data and activity on a termly basis. The aim of this was to promote continuous improvement of provision and intervention for LAC and young people, especially in regard to their transition into Post-16 learning.

Every young person at secondary school in Middlesbrough had a named Personal Adviser. The Personal Advisers worked in individual schools and provided an enhanced offer to LAC. There was an additional Personal Adviser who co-ordinated the work and acted as a link to the Education Looked After Children Manager. At the present time, the majority of Year 11 LAC in Middlesbrough had been seen at least once by their named Personal Adviser.

With regard to LAC, the IYSS was currently supporting Year 9 students (9), Year 10 students (9) and Year 11 students (17). This support to 35 young people was expected to continue for the foreseeable future. There were also 41 young people with a Care Order made to Middlesbrough who were educated outside of Middlesbrough. IYSS had regular contact with these young people and offered support should they return to Middlesbrough.

IYSS worked very closely with the Leaving Care Service and the two designated Personal Advisers were co-located a day each week with the team. Joint training and development activities continued for the Personal Advisers and for the Pathway Team. The benefits of this approach were reflected in the development of clear career progression plans for all young people. In line with the 2007 Care Matters, Time for Change White Paper, IYSS extended support to all care leavers up to the age of 24. There was clear commitment to have named advisers within IYSS.

When required, a transitions meeting took place between the school based Personal Adviser and the two Personal Advisers attached to the 'Pathways' Leaving Care Team. There was then a

handover of the support required for the individual young person, to ensure an effective transition.

IYSS, Leaving Care Service and Middlesbrough College had established “wrap around” support for young people embarking on college courses. This was due for review and could be rolled out to support young people on Foundation Learning, if successful. IYSS Personal Advisers continued to support ‘The Preparation for Independence’ programmes offered to all Care Leavers and accredited by the Open College Network.

IYSS Personal Advisers offered guidance to those on benefits, including young mums and those on sickness benefits to make them aware of their financial entitlement. Personal Advisers also supported unaccompanied asylum seekers who were receiving a service from Pathways. The majority of these young people had been referred previously into ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) at St Mary’s College, where independent living skills formed part of the programme.

Since the inception of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), IYSS Personal Advisers had offered guidance and support to all young people including LAC and Care Leavers to maximise their entitlement. EMA had been abolished for new claimants in January 2011 and all claimants by the end of July 2011. Guidance from Central Government was awaited, regarding how and which young people would be eligible to claim for the new, much more targeted allowance.

Concern was raised that if financial assistance for transport was also withdrawn under the Team Mover scheme this would also impact on the numbers of young people remaining in education. During this academic year 1900 young people had accessed the Team Mover scheme, 600 more than during the previous year. Although the funding would cease from 31 March 2011, it was confirmed that students would be able to use their bus passes until 31 August 2011.

RECOMMENDED that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to:

1. note the information relating to IYSS support for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
2. examine closely the issues of the withdrawal of the Education Maintenance Allowance and funding for transport for young people in Middlesbrough.

OVERVIEW OF YOUTH OFFENDING SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

The Corporate Parenting Board was presented with an update on the Youth Offending Service (YOS) work with Looked After Children (LAC) in Middlesbrough. It was recognised that children who were looked after by the Local Authority represented some of the more vulnerable members of society and the aim was to maximise their life chances and minimise risk of offending and exploitation and increase social inclusion by joint working and providing appropriate levels of offence focussed intervention.

In order to support this, the Youth Offending Service had representation on the Middlesbrough Multi Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP). This group had operational responsibility for corporate parenting, bringing together all agencies that influenced the services delivered to LAC and Care Leavers. The YOS representative on MALAP supplied information to that meeting to ensure that entry to the criminal justice system by LAC was monitored and all efforts at diversion were being made.

The YOS tracked new cases to ensure all those looked after were identified and allocated to appropriately experienced Case Managers who were regularly supervised to ensure they were working in partnership with Social Workers and Carers towards the most positive outcome. YOS staff received training, support and regular managerial oversight of their assessment and management of risk and vulnerability.

There were currently eighteen young people looked after by Middlesbrough subject to interventions from the Youth Offending Service. This equates to 5.2% of LAC and 12.2% of the total Middlesbrough YOS caseload. Two of those were subject to a Final Warning, twelve to supervision in the community (YRO or Referral Order) and four are serving Detention and

Training Orders. Four young people were aged 17, seven were 16, four were 15, two were 14 and one was 11.

The YOS continued to make efforts to reduce the entry of LAC to the youth justice system, promoting restorative processes to enable offending behaviour to be challenged and managed without resorting to criminal proceedings. As yet, no detail was available as to the indicators likely to be introduced by Central Government to monitor this in the future.

South Tees YOS offered comprehensive bail support packages, with or without intensive supervision and support, to those young people awaiting conviction or sentence on criminal charges. This provision enjoyed the confidence of the local Youth and Crown Courts. In the majority of cases an alternative to custodial remand was offered and accepted by the Court. However, some young people, either because the risk they posed to the public was too high or because they had no suitable accommodation, were remanded into custody.

The Ministry of Justice Green Paper released in December 2010 stated the Government's intention to encourage local authorities to reduce the use of custodial demand in their area by transferring the total cost of such placements to the Local Authority. Currently, remand places were funded centrally by the Ministry of Justice. It was highlighted that this could equate to a significant sum of money and there had been no indication that the budget would be transferred to local authorities.

There had been a drive to reduce the numbers down on remand and custodial sentences and there were monthly reviews to see whether things could be done differently. There were some similar local authorities whose figures were lower than Middlesbrough, however there were a significant number of quite dangerous young people in Middlesbrough who affected outcomes.

It was noted that engagement in education and training was a key indicator in a young person resisting offending and it was anticipated that withdrawal of the Education Maintenance Allowance would have an adverse impact on keeping young people engaged in education.

RECOMMENDED that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to:

1. note the information relating to the Ministry of Justice's Green Paper on changes to the funding of remands to custody.
2. endorse the continued work of South Tees Youth Offending Service in offering appropriate interventions for those who offended and alternatives to custody to prevent children and young people coming into the Looked After system.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER BY MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

A report was presented to provide Members with statistical information relating to the educational outcomes of Looked After Children (LAC), as measured against the key performance indicators linked to educational attainment.

In spite of clear improvements in GCSE outcomes at grades A*-C for LAC since 2000 (from 7% to 26% in 2010), the educational attainment of LAC remained low and the pace of change meant that the gap between those in care and all other children had in fact widened, with LAC under-performing significantly compared to their peers at all key stages of the education system. Unsurprisingly given this background, Care Leavers were more than twice as likely not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) at age nineteen.

The reasons for this were complex and included factors such as instability of care and school placements; too much time spent out of school and insufficient help with their education when they fell behind; their unmet emotional, mental and physical health needs; and the fact that their primary carers were often not equipped or expected to support and encourage their learning and development.

Statistical data for LAC was not published nationally when local authority year groups consisted of ten or less pupils, ten being the denominator. Given DCSF guidance, the statistical data included in this report would be withheld from national publication.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs) remained a statutory requirement for all children of compulsory school age who were expected to be in care for more than 28 days. PEPs allowed social workers and teachers to find out what children wanted from their education and for children to raise issues affecting their education. In September 2010 some changes were introduced to the format of the PEP in order to ensure consistent high quality plans with a focus on aspirational target setting and attainment. Headteachers, designated teachers and social workers all received training in the early autumn term 2010 on the programme to raise educational achievement of LAC and the new PEP format and target setting focus. Feedback on the PEP process over autumn 2010 and spring 2011 would be collected from designated teachers and social workers over the next few months.

The National Statistical Release for LAC Key Stage attainment was published on 16 December 2010. Current data sets held by the Data and Performance Team were reported as incomplete and only results for LAC placed in Middlesbrough schools were included for this reason. The data team used a system called Key to Success to collect Out of Authority LAC attainment data, but this was reported by the team as inconsistent. In addition, it was not clear whether some national data releases for local authorities included all LAC or just those placed in the Local Authority. The fact that some pupil UPNs were incorrectly submitted by local authorities also influenced the number of matched pupils which then influenced the statistics. The results detailed in the submitted report would be updated and made available following the incorporation of complete and validated data.

Five Middlesbrough LAC were noted as being eligible to be included in the DCSF returns at Key Stage 1, having been looked after continuously for a period of 12 months plus. Three children educated in Middlesbrough schools achieved their expected attainment levels, as recorded in their Personal Education Plans (PEPs). None of these 3 children had an SEN statement but two were on the SEN register.

Seventeen Middlesbrough LAC were noted as being eligible to be included in the DCSF returns at Key Stage 2, having been looked after continuously for a period of 12 months plus. Seven of these 17 children were educated in Middlesbrough schools. All children achieved their expected attainment levels, as recorded in their PEPs. Two of these 7 children had SEN statements and another 4 were on the SEN register.

Thirty-seven Middlesbrough LAC were noted as being eligible to be included in the DCSF return at Key Stage 4, having been looked after continuously for a period of 12 months plus. Thirteen of these 37 young people were educated in Middlesbrough schools. All children achieved their expected attainment levels, as recorded in their PEPs. Three of these 13 young people had SEN statements and another 8 were on the SEN register.

The programme of action designed in summer 2010 and covering the academic year 2010-2011 had a strong focus on the support of data systems development in schools and the Local Authority. In relation to the latter, the two recent appointments to the Data and Performance Team would take the lead on co-ordinating data collection and reporting from now on. The aim was to establish a permanent comprehensive system for the collection of pupil data for the Virtual School and to eliminate the inconsistencies present. This would ensure that the systems for monitoring and subsequent targeted early intervention were consistent and rigorous.

The LAC data presented in the submitted report did not include Out of Authority results. The review of data reporting systems (ie the processes linking schools, local authorities and the National Pupil Database) this autumn, indicated particular inconsistencies with the data on LAC Out of Authority.

A Board Member raised a concern regarding the provision of computers for all LAC in their foster carers' home. It was confirmed that funding was available to provide foster carers with a computer for LAC to access. The Service Level Agreement with independent providers included provision of access to a computer for all LAC by foster carers.

RECOMMENDED that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the information relating to the educational achievements of Looked After Children.

MIDDLESBROUGH AND FIVE RIVERS PARTNERSHIP

A report was presented to inform the Corporate Parenting Board of the current situation regarding the Five Rivers Partnership. The current ten-year contract with Five Rivers, who provided three children's homes in Middlesbrough, was due to end on 31 December 2011. Notice had been served that the contract would be ending and that there would be a competitive tendering exercise for the commissioning of future provision. A Working Party was exploring the options for the future provision of residential care in the Borough.

A Partnership Board met regularly to discuss current and future provision and the Authority's relationship with Five Rivers was good. Board meetings provided an opportunity for both parties to share strategic plans and this provided a useful opportunity to understand how Five Rivers was developing and share the challenges and issues that had emerged. During recent meetings, discussion had focussed on increases in the number of Looked After Children (LAC), budget pressures and the implications of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

The Tender would be advertised in April 2011 and a decision reached over the summer with a view to a new contract commencing in December 2011.

Residents of Marton Avenue had raised a number of complaints with regard to Fir Tree and problems with anti-social behaviour. Many of the incidents giving cause for concern were not connected with Fir Tree residents. Regular liaison meetings were taking place with the Specialist Services Manager to try and resolve the issues.

RECOMMENDED that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive that the current contractual arrangements with Five Rivers Ltd would end in December 2011.

SUMMARY OF REGULATION 33 REPORTS JANUARY 2010 - DECEMBER 2010 AND UPDATE ON ROTA VISITS

A report was presented to advise the Corporate Parenting Board of the outcomes of Regulation 33 visits to Five Rivers and Gleneagles Resource Centre and to provide an update on the situation regarding rota visits.

As partnership providers of residential care in Middlesbrough, Five Rivers had commissioned independent social workers to carry out monthly Regulation 33 visits. Reports were forwarded to OFSTED, the Executive Director of Children, Families and Learning, the Deputy Director of Safeguarding, the Specialist Services Manager and the Manager of the Home.

The report covered the period April to September 2010 and any identified actions would be progressed by the management within Five Rivers and Gleneagles. The reports contained information relating to the admission and discharge of young people, health and safety, administration, general management, consultation and support, and meeting the needs of young people against the Every Child Matters outcomes. All areas were scored using OFSTED gradings. The general findings of the inspections were positive with Fir Tree, Holly Lodge and Rosecroft all receiving an average score of 3 which was assessed as "good" according to OFSTED grades.

Regulation 33 visits had been undertaken on a monthly basis by middle managers within the Safeguarding Service to Gleneagles. The visits considered and reported on the building, staff, children and young people, comments, compliments and complaints and the Every Child Matters outcomes. The reports were thorough and positive and any corrective actions had an identified responsible officer and timescales for completion.

The Rota Visits were introduced in 2007 and to date had not been as successful as had been hoped. Seven Elected Members had received training for undertaking visits. During the period April to September 2010 there were two rota visits to Fir Tree, in April and August and two visits to Holly Lodge in April and September. Rosecroft and Gleneagles had not had any rota visits over the time period.

RECOMMENDED that the Corporate Parenting Board advised the Executive to note the information relating to Regulation 33 and rota visits.

PATHWAYS LEAVING CARE SERVICE

The Annual Report of Middlesbrough Council's Leaving Care Service for 2010 was presented. A copy of the Annual Report was attached as Appendix 1 to the submitted report. The Annual Report gave information on the aims and objectives of the Leaving Care Service, the service and facilities provided, staffing, achievements and developments during 2010 and issues and developments for 2010.

A permanent Manager of the Pathways Team had now been appointed following a six-month vacancy. The Youth Development Post had not been filled as the vacancy was taken as a saving for the Council. In addition, there was no longer a dedicated Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children post due to the low numbers of unaccompanied asylum seekers since September 2010. This post was previously grant-funded based on the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers.

Some of the many activities and developments during 2010 were detailed in the report under the five Every Child Matters outcomes and the following points were highlighted:

- Three young people had supported Teesside University by taking part in assessing conversations with student social worker applicants. This involved an interview style environment which was recorded and marked. Middlesbrough's young people were very professional, supportive and appropriately challenging of students and participated fully in their assessment. The young people then developed a presentation to inform the students of their overall views to support their development.
- The Team continued to complete exit interviews with young people who ceased to be Looked After at 18 years old and those who left the service at 21 years old. Many young people had positive experiences in foster care and wanted to stay longer.
- The Pathways Team continued to encourage and advocate for young people to remain within their placement until they were prepared and ready to leave. The Supported Lodging Scheme continued to be successful, with ten placements. Two new possible providers had expressed an interest.
- The Accommodation Worker was an active member on the new Youth Co-ordinator Panel. The Panel included representation from all housing providers in Middlesbrough and workers could send in referrals, which would be dealt with at one meeting. This enabled a young person's needs to be matched with the most suitable accommodation available and also provided a network and a monitoring system.
- The 'From Care2Work' employability scheme within Pathways was ready to be launched. The Action Plan had been presented to the Economic Well-being Group for a strategic oversight and support.
- Six young people had taken part in the Self-Esteem Group Work Programme for young people. This was aimed at supporting their positive mental health. The group was facilitated by the Looked After Children Nurse and a Pathways Team member. European funding had been received and Middlesbrough had been part of a Trans-national Project aimed at developing a resource pack to support the emotional well-being of care leavers and ultimately improve their employability. Representatives from the Team had visited Romania and a presentation and evaluation was available.

Issues for 2010 included:

- Continuing to strengthen links with the Looked After Team to ensure a smooth transition for all young persons from the Looked After Service to the Leaving Care Service.

- Continuing to provide services to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and implement policy and procedure to ensure that a good quality service was provided. Robust age assessments to ensure appropriate access to services would also continue.
- Providing training to support the implementation of the Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations volume 2, related to LAC and volume 3, transitions to adulthood in relation to care leavers, from April 2011.

The Board noted the vast range of activities undertaken and wished to place on record their appreciation to the Pathways Team for their effort and commitment.

RECOMMENDED that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the contents of the report on the Pathways Leaving Care Service.

MIDDLESBROUGH FAMILY PLACEMENT PANEL ACTIVITY REPORT APRIL 2010 - DECEMBER 2010

A report was presented to advise the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the activity of Middlesbrough's Family Placement Panel during the period 1 April 2010 to 31 December 2010. The Family Placement Panel met on twenty-nine occasions during that period and the number of items considered in each category during the nine month period were detailed on page 3 of the submitted report. For comparison purposes, a table showing items considered by the Panel over the previous twenty-one month period was shown on page 4 of the submitted report. The Family Placement Panel had continued to meet weekly due to the volume of work and this was likely to continue.

It was noted that one foster carer had been de-registered due to concerns about the standard of care provided and a further ten had retired from fostering.

The number of adopters approved had reduced as the Authority had been very successful over the past year in placing seventeen children with Middlesbrough adopters, thus exhausting the current supply.

The number of new foster carers approved during the last nine months had increased and nine had been approved. There were currently fourteen assessments in progress.

Recruitment of both adopters and foster carers was a national problem and the Authority continued to make efforts to recruit and retain. People from all walks of life were considered so long as they could meet the fundamental needs of children.

It was noted that a number of reports had been deferred due to concerns about quality, presentation or lack of information, and this appeared to be an ongoing issue. The Board was informed that mandatory training had been completed by all Social Workers around preparation for Panel and the completion and quality of reports and this would continue.

On behalf of the Corporate Parenting Board, the Chair commended the Members of the Family Placement Panel for the huge amount of work that they undertook on behalf of the Council.

RECOMMENDED that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the information relating to the Family Placement Panel.