

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Corporate Parenting Board

Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2009-2010
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Executive Member for Children, Families & Learning: Cllr Mike Carr
Director of Children, Families & Learning: Gill Rollings

24th June 2010

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to present the Corporate Parenting Board with the Annual Report 2009-2010 (Appendix 1).

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the information relating to the Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2009-2010.

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. Corporate parenting is a core statutory responsibility and central government continues to set clear targets and performance indicators in respect of services for children looked after by local authorities. In July 2009, the government issued new statutory guidance on "*The Roles and Responsibilities of the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services*". This guidance was considered by the Executive (15/9/2009) and corporate parenting arrangements in Middlesbrough were the subject of a Members' seminar (15/10/2009). The Corporate Parenting Board considered two further reports relating to these issues (29/10/2009 & 22/4/2010). The review of corporate parenting arrangements is ongoing.

ACTIVITY OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD 2009-2010

6. During the year, the Pledge for children looked after was agreed with children and young people (4/6/2009) and by the Executive (21/7/2009). The Children's Trust Board also signed up to the Pledge, in December 2009. Social work practitioners are currently working with children and young people to embed the Pledge into care planning and review processes. During the year, work was started on the development of a Children in Care Council and elected Members have met with children and young people in a variety of contexts.
7. A key event in 2009 was the publication of the "*Care Matters Ministerial Stocktake Report 2009*". This provided the Corporate Parenting Board (21/1/2010) with an opportunity to review how well Middlesbrough has responded to the requirements of the White Paper, 'Care Matters: Time for Change'. Overall, Middlesbrough has benefited from the proactive approach that has been taken in relation to Every Child Matters and Care Matters, in that work has already been undertaken in respect of most of the key issues raised in the stocktake report. The Corporate Parenting Board will continue to ensure that the new legislation and statutory guidance arising from Care Matters is implemented appropriately.
8. The Board also considered a number of reports in relation to specific issues to comply with requirements under regulations and guidance. The recommendations of the Board were submitted to the Executive for approval and have been implemented. The attached report describes the work of the Board in more detail.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9. There are no specific issues arising from the information presented within this report.

OPTION APPRAISAL/RISK ASSESSMENT

10. Not applicable to this report.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

11. There are no immediate financial or legal implications arising from this report. This report will be of interest to all Members.

RECOMMENDATION

12. It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Board advise the Executive to note the issues relating to corporate parenting.

REASON

13. It is important that the Executive is aware of the work undertaken by the Corporate Parenting Board in enabling the authority to achieve the best possible outcomes for children looked after and care leavers.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

14. The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:
Minutes of, and reports to, the Corporate Parenting Board June 2009 – April 2010

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Corporate Parenting Board

Report on Activity

May 2009 to April 2010

The Pledge: "A promise you have to keep."

**Mike Carr - Executive Member
for Children, Families & Learning**

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



1. Introduction

This report sets out the work undertaken by the Corporate Parenting Board during the past year. The origins and development of the Corporate Parenting Board are attached at Appendix A. The Government's expectations of Councillors as corporate parents are detailed in Appendix B. Information about the remit and membership of the Corporate Parenting Board for 2009-2010 is set out in Appendix C. Details of the reports considered by the Board are included at Appendix D.

2. Summary of Activity

There were eight meetings of the Board between June 2009 and April 2010. Members considered reports and information provided by services within the Children, Families and Learning Department, the voluntary sector and the Primary Care Trust (see Appendix C for more details).

The Corporate Parenting Board considered a wide range of issues and advised the Executive on a range of decisions and issues including:

Approval of:

- The Pledge: "A promise you have to keep."
- Corporate Parenting Board Remit and Forward Work Programme for 2009-2010
- Adoption Service Statement of Purpose and the Children's Guide for 2009/10
- Fostering Service Statement of Purpose and the Children's Guide for 2009/10
- Policy for Health Assessments for Children in the Care of the Local Authority

Aspects of:

- The rising numbers of children looked after and related capacity issues.
- The numbers of children educated outside of Middlesbrough and the difficulties this may create.
- The appointment of a Virtual Head Teacher for children looked after.
- The provision of Ward-based data.
- Raising the awareness of all elected Members in relation to their responsibilities as corporate parents.

Recognition of:

- The value of meeting children and young people and working with them to develop the Pledge.
- The importance of sticking with young people, especially those who challenge the authority's ability to support them.
- The commitment of Members of the Family Placement Panel, particularly in light of the increased workload.

"We will make sure you can talk to the adults who make decisions that affect you."

During the year, Members of the Board met with nine children and young people in relation to developing the Pledge and one young person attended a meeting of the Board to discuss the Resolution and Reunification Resource. In addition, the views of children and young people were represented within reports relating to the Pledge, Advocacy, and the Care Leavers' conference.

3. Key Issues Discussed by the Board

The Pledge: "A promise you have to keep."

A key success was the agreement with children and young people looked after and care leavers of the Council's Pledge. This was the culmination of a robust process involving significant joint working between young people and the Members of the Board. The Pledge was approved by the Executive in July 2009 and the Children's Trust Board signed up to the Pledge in December 2009. The Pledge will be used in care planning and review processes to shape the services that children and young people receive. Work is underway to embed the Pledge into social work practice.

The publication of new statutory guidance on "*The Roles and Responsibilities of the Lead Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services*" led to a number of discussions within and beyond the Corporate Parenting Board. Members have considered a number of proposed changes in relation to the membership and administration of the Corporate Parenting Board as well as wider issues in relation to corporate and partnership working. Ways of ensuring that all elected Members are aware of their responsibilities as corporate parents were also discussed.

"We will help you to keep in touch with your family."

The Board expressed concern about the rising numbers of children looked after and the possible capacity issues that might arise. One aspect of this was the increased workload of the Family Placement Panel, which had met on a weekly basis for part of the year. Another was the potential impact on the availability of suitable placements for children.

"We will try very hard to make sure that you live with people who care about you and care for you."

The Board was pleased to note that the review of payments to foster carers has been completed. Foster carers expressed their appreciation of the increase in allowances. The training and support of foster carers is now subject to new standards developed by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC). These standards began to be implemented during the year and the Board will monitor further progress. The recruitment and retention of foster carers, in the face of competition from independent fostering agencies and a national shortage of people willing to become foster carers, continues to be of concern to the Board.

"We will try to make sure you feel safe, have private space and time for you."

The Board welcomed the success of the 'Crash Pad', which was developed in partnership with Community Campus to alleviate the problem of short-term placements in Bed & Breakfast accommodation. This facility has given young people time, within a safe living environment, to secure more permanent accommodation.

“We will believe in you and support you to do well in education, training and employment.”

Despite some improvements in outcomes, the educational attainment of children in care remains low in comparison with their peers at all key stages of the education system. Although the results attained were below the national and Middlesbrough averages at all Key Stages, all children had achieved their expected attainment levels as recorded in their Personal Education Plans (PEPs).

“We will support you if you feel that you are being treated unfairly.”

The Board was pleased to note that Middlesbrough has now appointed a School Adviser for Vulnerable Children to assist with individual pupil tracking and championing the education of LAC as well as taking on some of the responsibilities of a ‘virtual head teacher’. It is hoped that understanding and communication between professionals involved in supporting the educational achievement of LAC will improve. The Board is keen to receive further information from the Virtual Head on the steps being taken to improve the educational attainments of children looked after. In particular, the Board is concerned about the education of children placed outside of Middlesbrough.

“We will encourage you to think about your dreams and achieve your ambitions.”

In relation to employment, the Board was pleased to hear that services across the Council have been very supportive in providing work experience placements to children and young people looked after.

4. Conclusion

Two key events for 2009-2010 were the agreement of the Pledge with children looked after and care leavers and the publication of statutory guidance on *“The Roles and Responsibilities of the Lead Member for Children’s Services and the Director of Children’s Services”*. The Pledge is entirely based on the views of children and young people about what is important to them. It will provide a valuable mechanism for improving the lives of children and young people looked after. The new guidance lead to a review of corporate parenting arrangements, which will be completed during the forthcoming year.

The Corporate Parenting Board is committed to ensuring that the Pledge is implemented effectively and to enabling children looked after to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Sue Little
Children’s Participation Officer
June 2010

The Origins and Development of the Corporate Parenting Board

Middlesbrough Council established the Corporate Parenting Board in February 2000 (Cabinet, 8/2/2000). The aim was to provide a focus for activities arising from the responsibilities of Members and Officers to act as “good parents” in relation to children looked after by the authority. The Board was developed in response to specific expectations being placed on local authorities by central government within the Quality Protects Framework (see Appendix B).

After the first year of operation, the Cabinet (13/2/2001) gave the Board delegated powers so that it became the recognised decision-making body in respect of the Council’s corporate parenting responsibilities for children and young people looked after (see Appendix C for remit and membership for 2008-2009).

The Cabinet (13/2/2001) also approved the first draft of the ‘Corporate Parenting Policy and Strategy’, which included sections on:

- Children’s Rights and Children’s Participation
- Assessment, Care Planning and Review
- Placement
- Education and Personal Development
- Health
- Care Leavers
- Achieving Best Value

This document was revised and updated in January 2008 to reflect changes in legislation, guidance and performance indicators. The strategy is in keeping with the National Performance Indicators for Children, the Every Child Matters Outcome Framework and the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child. This document provides a framework for corporate parenting within the authority and is subject to monitoring and review by the Corporate Parenting Board.

In September 2002, following changes in constitutional arrangements, the Corporate Parenting Board was re-established as an advisory body to the Executive Board. As the Corporate Parenting Board does not consist entirely of Executive Board Members, it could no longer exercise delegated powers. Decisions made by the Corporate Parenting Board were, therefore submitted to the Executive for approval via the minutes.

From January 2003, the Executive sought to clarify decision-making processes by requiring the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board to present a report to the Executive Board as soon as appropriate after each meeting. This report details the business that has been considered and highlights the Board’s recommendations to the Executive in respect of any decisions that are required.

The remit of the Corporate Parenting Board was revised and updated in June 2009 and further changes may arise as a result of the current review of corporate parenting arrangements.

The Role of Members as Corporate Parents

Central government has very clear expectations of local authorities in respect of corporate parenting. These expectations were sent in a letter from the Secretary of State for Health to each elected Member in the country in September 1998. In summary, the Secretary of State had three key messages for Councillors:

- children in the public care must be the primary focus for the resources and accountability of the local authority which has accepted a parenting responsibility for them;
- children who have spent a significant time being looked after by the local authority should afterwards be given the kind of support that decent and responsible parents would give their own children:
- children in the public care and other children in need, including disabled children, should be provided with a fully rounded set of support and care services, in partnership with health and education services particularly.

The Secretary of State also spelt out the government's expectations of the 'Local Authority as Corporate Parent':

- provide care, a home and access to health and education and other public services to which all children are entitled according to their needs
- provide a mixture of care and firmness to support the child's development, and be the tolerant, dependable and available partner in the adult/child relationship even in the face of disagreements
- protect and educate the child against the perils and risks of life by encouraging constructive and appropriate friendships, and discouraging destructive and harmful relationships
- celebrate and share their children's achievements, supporting them when they are down
- recognise and respect their growth to independence, being tolerant and supportive if they make mistakes
- provide consistent support and be available to provide advice and practical help when needed
- advocate their cause and trouble-shoot on their behalf when necessary

- be ambitious for them and encourage and support their efforts to get on and reach their potential, whether through education, training or employment
- provide occasional financial support, remember birthdays and Christmas or annual celebrations within the individual child's religion and culture
- encourage and enable appropriate contact with family members – parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and brothers and sisters
- help them to feel part of the local community through contact with neighbours and local groups
- be proactive, not passive, when there are known or suspected serious difficulties

In 2003, the Government issued further guidance entitled, *“If this were my child...A Councillor's Guide to Being a Good Corporate Parent”* (Crowe J, 2003, Department for Education and Skills and the Local Government Information Unit). This guidance re-emphasised the importance of elected Members being good Corporate Parents. It provided guidance and examples of good practice in relation to the role of all Members, Members of the Executive and Members of Scrutiny Panels in enabling children looked after to achieve the Every Child Matters outcomes:

- Be Healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy & Achieve
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Achieve Economic Well-being

In particular, the guidance highlighted the role of Members in providing clear leadership to ensure corporate parenting is addressed by all services within the local authority, working in partnership with other agencies and ensuring that resources are targeted appropriately.

The overarching message was that, when thinking about the services they provide as corporate parents, Members should ask themselves “Is this good enough for my child?”.

Further advice on corporate parenting is provided in *Putting Corporate Parenting into Practice* (2008, National Children's Bureau). This includes similar key messages, some training resources and briefings on a wide range of issues.

APPENDIX C

Remit of the Corporate Parenting Board

The Corporate Parenting Board will work in an advisory capacity to the Executive in relation to enabling the Council to fulfil its corporate parenting responsibilities for children and young people who are looked after or accommodated by the local authority, and care leavers.

The Corporate Parenting Board will be responsible for:

- (i) Ensuring that children and young people for whom the Authority has corporate parenting responsibilities are enabled to achieve the outcomes set out in the Every Child Matters outcomes framework:
 - Be Healthy
 - Stay Safe
 - Enjoy & Achieve
 - Make a Positive Contribution
 - Achieve Economic Well-being;
- (ii) Listening to the views and ideas of children and young people for whom the Authority has corporate parenting responsibilities and ensuring that those views and ideas are taken into account in decision-making processes;
- (iii) Developing effective corporate responses to fulfil the Authority's responsibilities as a Corporate Parent;
- (iv) Proposing changes to policy and informing service development in the context of corporate parenting;
- (v) The dissemination of information on corporate parenting to all elected Members and anyone else to whom it may be relevant; and
- (vi) The implementation, maintenance and review of this Council's 'Corporate Parenting Policy and Strategy' document and the Local Authority's 'Pledge' to children and young people for whom the Authority has corporate parenting responsibilities.

Reporting and Decision-making

The Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board will present a report to the full Executive as soon as is practical after each meeting. This report will detail the business that has been considered and highlight the Board's recommendations to the Executive in respect of any decisions that may be required. Those decisions will be made by the full Executive to ensure effective corporate decision-making and accountability in respect of the Authority's corporate parenting responsibilities.

Membership Requirements

All Members of the Corporate Parenting Board are required to have initiated an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check within one month of their appointment to the Board, if a current enhanced check is not already in place.

The position of Chair of the Board may be held by any elected Member and membership should normally include the Lead Member for children's social care services, the Lead Member for adults' social care services and the Deputy Mayor.

Corporate Parenting Board Membership (2009 - 2010)

Councillor F McIntyre	Chair
Councillor J Brunton	Vice Chair & Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Board
Councillor S Biswas	
Councillor D Budd	Deputy Mayor
Councillor M Carr	Executive Member for Children, Families & Learning
Councillor E Dryden	Chair of Health Scrutiny Panel
Councillor J McTigue	Resigned 30/7/2009
Councillor P Rogers	
Councillor C Rooney	
Councillor B Thompson	Executive Member for Public Health & Sport

Observers:

Brian Simpson	Foster Carer
Chris Nugent	Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland Community Services
Steve Percival	National Youth Advocacy Service

The Board has places for up to 6 young people to attend.

APPENDIX D

Reports/presentations to the Corporate Parenting Board June 2009 to April 2010

- Key Issues in Corporate Parenting (presentation)
- Corporate Parenting Board Report on Activity May 2008 – April 2009
- Corporate Parenting Board Remit & Forward Work Programme
- Corporate Parenting – A Shared Responsibility
- Care Matters Ministerial Stocktake Report 2009
- Review of Corporate Parenting Arrangements

- Middlesbrough Pledge Update
- Usage of National Youth Advocacy Service – April 2008-March 2009

- Children Looked After Profile and Ward Data (presentation)
- Children Looked After Statistical Update x2

- Middlesbrough Family Placement Panel Activity Report for Oct 2008-March 2009
- Middlesbrough Family Placement Panel Activity Report for April to Sept 2009
- Adoption Service Annual Report, Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide 2009
- Fostering Service Annual Report, Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide 2009
- Ofsted Inspection of Middlesbrough Council Adoption Service in November 2009
- Ofsted Inspection of Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service in November 2009

- Update Report on Children Missing from Placement
- Resolution & Reunification Resource

- Health of Children Looked After – Update
- Policy for Health Assessments for Children in the Care of the Local Authority
- Safeguarding of Children Looked After
- Educational Achievements of Children Looked After by Middlesbrough Council
- Make a Positive Contribution

- Middlesbrough Leaving Care Service – Annual Report 2009
- Care Leavers' Conference

- Youth Offending Service – Youth Justice Board Inspection & Update on Children Looked After