

# MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

## Corporate Parenting Board

<h3>MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2011</h3>
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**Executive Member for Children Families & Learning: Mike Carr**

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

**Date: 10 November 2011**

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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 2010/11 and plans for the year 2011/12.
  - (b) the Statement of Purpose for Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service for 2011/12.
  - (c) the draft Children's Guide to Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service for 2011/12.

### 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 for 2011/12.
  - (c) Agree that the next annual review of the Statement of Purpose and Children's guide should take place in April 2012 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

### DECISION IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE

4. For the purposes of the scrutiny call in procedure this report is  
Non-urgent   
Urgent report

## BACKGROUND AND EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

5. The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services were brought into force on 1st April 2011. 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 2010/11

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

Number of enquires received	150
Number of requests for initial visits	48
Number of applications	5
Number of foster carers approved	13
Number of foster carers de-registered	15
Total number of approved foster carers on 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2010	77
Number of children in foster care on 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2010	101
Number of children whose long-term fostering plans were approved	10
Number of children matched with long-term foster carers	16

7. The fostering team has had a period of relative stability with two staff members retiring and others moving to new posts.
8. Four new staff have been recruited via redeployment process – 2 social workers, 1 support worker and a new Training & Development Officer.
9. A new Team Manager was appointed in May 2011- this post had been vacant for a significant period of time.
10. Staff recruited to new posts will now cover both Fostering & Adoption in order to respond to the needs and pressures on any one part of the service.
11. Two staff members will be going on maternity leave shortly; cover for these posts will be a further challenge for the service.

12. The Fostering Service provides a programme of post-approval training for registered foster carers and during 2010/2011, the topics for the training sessions were:

2010

- ◆ Paediatric First Aid
- ◆ Paediatric First Aid
- ◆ Communicating with Children
- ◆ Drug Awareness
- ◆ The Impact of Early Trauma on Children
- ◆ Identity
- ◆ Managing Behaviour
- ◆ Caring for Black and Minority Ethnic Children
- ◆ Certificate in Equality and Diversity – Distance Learning supported through Middlesbrough College 2010
- ◆ Certificate in Nutrition - Distance Learning supported through Middlesbrough College 2010
- ◆ L2 Award in Safeguarding Children and Young People - Distance Learning supported through Middlesbrough College 2010

2011

- ◆ Life Appreciation Day
- ◆ Paediatric First Aid
- ◆ Child Protection
- ◆ Caring for Travellers/Refugees/BME
- ◆ Safer Care
- ◆ Telling and Explaining Adoption
- ◆ Caring for Teenagers

In Addition:

42 On-line training modules were purchased from The Fostering Network which cover the following - Safer Care, Education, Contact, Health, Behaviour, Attachment. Six carers at present have taken up this opportunity

13. Foster carers 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. The training is targeted to the individual needs of the foster carer and each carer has a Personal Development Plan.
14. The Fostering Service will continue to implement the standards issued by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC), relating to the training and support of foster carers. The implementation of the new Family & Friends standards will also be worked towards during 2011. There has been a significant cost associated with the implementation of the CWDC standards, both in staff time and financial resources.

## **PLANS AND ISSUES FOR 2011/12**

15. As part of Foster Care Fortnight, Middlesbrough Family Placement Team held a celebration event for foster carers. The event was themed 'Team around the Child' and recognised and celebrated foster carers' commitment to the care of children and young people. Through this event, the fostering service and foster carers appeared on Tyne Tees evening news and were interviewed by BBC Tees Radio.
16. In September 2011, Middlesbrough Family Placement Team held a Fun Day event for children and foster carers.
17. The children's Christmas Party is in the process of being organized and will take place on 3rd December 2011. A donation of £500 has been received to cover the costs of this event.
18. The implementation of the new Fostering Regulations, Guidance and NMS in April 2011 required that as a service, we update our policies and procedures – this is an ongoing activity.
19. In March 2011, the Government launched the Foster Care Charter – to build on this we are consulting with our foster carers and will follow this with a formal launch of the Charter.
20. We have been working with the Sports Development Team to provide children and young people that are in placement with our foster carers the opportunity to become involved in sporting activities that they may not be accessing.
21. 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 utilised scarce staffing resources and reduced the time prospective carers have to wait for a group. We anticipate further collaboration in the coming year, which may include other neighbouring authorities.
22. Members of the fostering team attended events throughout the year, for example the Mela & the Cleveland Show.
23. We are utilizing modern technology to obtain free advertising via our website and Middlesbrough grid for learning, and have placed adverts in local magazines.
24. We have organized slideshows on electronic display screens at MTLC and Middlesbrough bus station, and provided local schools and other authority venues with posters to display in respect of fostering for Middlesbrough.
25. Next year we plan to recruit and raise the awareness of fostering by being involved in the 5k Run. Social workers, foster carers & young people will run together wearing the Fostering Team's logo 'Team Around the Child'.
26. We continue to work towards the Child Care Strategy target set for the number of foster carers to be recruited, which is to increase the foster care numbers to 100 by 2014. At the present time we have 78 approved carers.

27. 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. Still ongoing.

## **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND CHILDREN'S GUIDE FOR 2011/12**

28. The Statement of Purpose for 2011/12 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.
29. The draft Children's Guides to Middlesbrough Council Fostering Service for 2011/12 are attached as Appendix 2 and Appendix 2B. The content of these documents is also set out in Regulations. The guides will be presented to the Children in Care Council (CICC) for their comments.
30. These documents must be updated annually and are now being presented to Corporate Parenting Board for the 9th annual review.

## **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

31. 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**

32. Not applicable to this piece of work.

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

33. 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**

34. 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 2011/12

- c) Agree that the next annual review of these documents should take place in April 2012 or as soon as possible thereafter.

## **REASONS**

35. 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 2011
  - (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 16 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services 2011.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

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