

CHILDREN'S AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION SCHEDULE



Tuesday 10 July 2012

at 10.00 am

in Committee Room C, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Councillor Cath Hill, Cabinet Member responsible for Children's and Community Services will consider the following items.

1. KEY DECISIONS

- 1.1 Adult Education Fees – Academic Year 2012-2013 – *Director of Child and Adult Services*

2. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

- 2.1 Proposed Regular Car Boot Events at Hartlepool's Maritime Experience – *Assistant Director (Community Services)*
- 2.2 School Term and Holiday Dates: School Year 2013/14 – *Director of Child and Adult Services*

3. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- 3.1 Rossmere Children's Centre Ofsted Inspection - *Director of Children's Services*
- 3.2 Report on Family Placement Panel Activity – *Director of Child and Adult Services*

CHILDREN'S AND COMMUNITY SERVICES REPORT

10th July 2012



Report of: Director of Child and Adult Services

Subject: ADULT EDUCATION FEES – ACADEMIC YEAR
2012-2103

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

This decision is a key decision - Key test (ii), key decision forward plan reference number CAS124/12.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To consider the level of adult education fees for the academic year 1st August 2012 to 31st July 2013

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Adult Education service delivers provision funded through the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and other income sources. This report relates to the main SFA funding streams i.e. Adult Skills (AS) Adult Safeguarded Learning (ASL) and First Steps (FS). However it should be noted that some Adult Education courses operate under funding received from other funding streams and these courses may be subject to different fee levels prescribed by the funding requirements
- 3.2 In the level of funding which the SFA provides for Adult Skills assumptions are made by the SFA about the level of income which providers will receive from fees. The following assumptions are made by the SFA in the grants which it makes to local authorities for the provision of SFA funded skills courses. At least 50% of the funding associated with the course is recovered in income from fees from learners or employers. There are exemptions to this for specific types of learners and courses where full fee remission is permitted, for example learners on Skills for Life courses and those on specific job related benefits

- 3.3 At present no specific income assumptions are made in relation to the ASL or First Steps budgets, although it is assumed that those learners who are able to pay are charged at least the same proportion as the other funding streams.
- 3.4 From August 2011 the SFA changed its policy on the collection of fees and who they support for remission of fees. From 2011 onwards the only learners who are eligible for SFA fee remission are those who are on active work related benefits i.e. Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) or Employment Support Allowance (ESA) . There are some exceptions to this list for those on skills for life classes and those who are aged 19 – 23
- 3.5 The SFA has further indicated that where organisations fail to collect the assumed fee income then this sum may be removed from the funding allocation
- 3.6 The current fee schedule for Adult Education courses (2011/2012) is attached as at **Appendix 1**. The level of fees at present is different according to the SFA funding stream
- 3.7 At present adult education courses fall into four main categories:
- Vocational courses (leading to a formal or work-related qualification);
 - First steps courses which introduce adults to learning and help them to progress to further vocational courses
 - Non-vocational courses (such as Family Learning, Foreign Languages, Arts and Crafts, and other courses which are studied for leisure.)
 - Courses which support Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities(NLDC)
- 3.8 At present the funding for these different types of courses is set at different levels. No fees are charged for Family Learning, Family Literacy Language and Numeracy and NLDC. These are seen as developmental courses to reach non-traditional learners or those in deprived areas.
- 3.9 No fees are charged for those studying Literacy and Numeracy. This is in line with government guidelines.
- 3.10 No fees are charged to learners who fall within specific groups as defined by the SFA as eligible for full funding e.g. 19-23 year olds. A full list of the SFA contributions is shown in **Appendix 2**.
- 3.11 In addition in 2011 the service introduced a 50% fee remission for those who are not on active work related benefits but who are on other benefits such as income support who have been disadvantaged under the new SFA rules. In the current academic year 9% of learners on Vocational type course benefitted from this additional eligibility.

- 3.12 At present courses which lead to a vocational qualification or are the first steps towards a qualification attract a lesser enrolment fee than those which are studied purely for leisure (PCDL)
- 3.13 Because of the desire to encourage participation in adult learning, a combination of low fees and extensive remission of fees has meant that overall income for adult education courses has been relatively low, e.g. in the academic year 2011/2012 income from student fees is expected to be approximately **6%** of the expenditure/budget. This has been supplemented by the provision of bespoke and private courses for organisations such as employers which are charged at the full cost rate.

4. PROPOSALS

There are a number of options proposed which will need to satisfy the reduced eligibility of fee remission and the need to collect sufficient fee income.

4.1.1 Vocational and First Steps course.

The first option would be to maintain the current fee rate for these types of courses. This would encourage participation and ensure that the service met its participation targets. However it could mean that the gap between fee income and assumed fee income would widen. This may have the effect of the SFA removing some element of funding but there is at present no clear guidance from the SFA that this will happen. (*This is the preferred option*)

- 4.1.2 The second option would be to continue to raise the level of fees with effect from August 2012 to move towards the higher level of fees which is assumed in the SFA guidelines. These levels are not yet clear but this would mean a significant increase in fees which will disadvantage many learners. This option could result in a loss of students to adult education courses, which in turn would mean that targets might not be achieved.

- 4.1.4 The third option would be to increase fees by the rate of inflation. This would give a rise of £2.62 per year for a 60 hour course taking the fee from £105 to £107.62. This figure could cause more administration time to collect. It is believed that this level of fee increase would generate additional income to cover increased costs and would move towards the required SFA fee increase levels in a gradual way. However it may lead to a reduction in learner number and therefore failure to reach the income targets.

4.2 Personal and Community Development Learning

- 4.2.1 The first option would be to maintain the current fee rate for all courses. This would mean, however, that the gap between fee income and course costs would widen as costs have risen by inflation. However the fees were increased by a substantial amount in 2011 and this led to a drop in learners participating in this type of provision. *This is the preferred option.*

4.2.2 The second option would be to increase the differential fee structure for PCDL classes. Courses categorized as PCDL courses would be subject to a larger increase of 5%. This equates to an increase of £7.50 i.e. £157.50 a year for a 30 week course. This equates to £2.62 per hour which is a rise of 12p per hour. It is believed that this level of fee increase would generate sufficient income to cover increased costs and would move towards the required SFA fee increase levels. However this would make us more expensive than other local providers which could lead to a reduction in learner numbers and a failure to reach the SFA targets.

4.2.3 The third option would be to increase fees by the rate of inflation. This would give a rise of £3.75 per year for a 60 hour course taking the fee from £150 to £153.75. This figure could cause more administration time to collect. It is believed that this level of fee increase would generate additional income. However it may lead to a reduction in learner number and therefore failure to reach the income targets.

4.3 Courses which attract no fee at present

4.3.1 The first option would be to introduce a fee structure to these classes which is consistent with the other types of courses. This would have a significant impact on those disadvantaged learners who are hard to reach.

4.3.2.1 The second option is to continue to give full fee remission for those classes which fall into developmental areas, i.e., Literacy and Numeracy, Family Learning, Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy and Neighborhood Learning in Deprived Communities. This would continue to support widening participation in line with government priorities. *This is the preferred option.*

4.4 Administration charge

4.4.1 This is the only fee charged to students eligible for fee remission. It is referred to as the 'remitted fee'.

4.4.2 At present the administration charge for students eligible for fee remission is set as £10 per vocational course and £15 per PCDL course.

4.4.3 The first option would be to keep this at the same level for the next academic year. *This is the preferred option.*

4.4.4 The second option would be to raise the administration charge by the inflation rate. This would raise a very small amount of additional income, but this would be offset by the additional administrative costs of the charge.

4.4.5 The payment of the existing administration charge does not seem to have presented barriers to access. Any individual cases of hardship would be considered confidentially.

4.5 Fee remission

- 4.5.1 The first option would be to come in line with the new SFA guidelines on eligibility. This would adversely affect some learners but would satisfy the new SFA eligibility guidelines and therefore ensure the full income targets.
- 4.5.2 A second option would be to continue the interim fee remission policy set last year. In this learners who are no, longer eligible for full fee remission could be offered 50% fee remission on Vocational and First Steps courses. This would ensure that these courses were still accessible for all but would mean that extra funding would need to be set aside from the existing budget to cover these costs. *This is the preferred option*

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 If adult education fees are set in accordance with SFA guidance, then there are no financial implications for the Council's budget as the level of fee increases will be sufficient to enable the Adult Education Service to operate SFA funded courses within the budget allocated by the SFA
- 5.2 If no increase in fees is agreed or insufficient increase, then there could be financial implications for the Council as any overspend on the SFA budget would have to be met by the Local Authority and no budgetary provision is available to meet this demand.
- 5.3 Any significant increase in fees is likely to result in a loss of student numbers. However if the fee income levels do not match SFA expectations then this may in future result in reduced funding as targets would not be achieved.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 That the Portfolio Holder approve the following recommendations:
- i. Vocational and First Steps Learning courses remain at £105 for a 60 hour course and £35 for a 20 hour course;
 - ii. PCDL courses remain at £150 for a 60 hour course and £50 for a 20 hour course;
 - iii. No course fees should be charged to students entitled under the SFA guidance on remitted fees (except for a one-off administration charge);
 - iv. The fee remission policy should continue to follow the SFA guidelines guidance for PCDL type courses. For Vocational and First Steps there will be continued support where those learners who are now not eligible for fee remission are charged 50% of the full fee rate. Courses which are developed to widen participation or in response to specific government initiatives e.g. students with a disability, Asylum seekers and Refugees,

Family learning or community regeneration activities would continue to be given full fee remission. The full policy is given in **Appendix 1**.

- v. The administration charge should remain at current levels i.e. £10 for vocational and First Steps courses and £15 for PCDL courses.
- vi. Courses which are not supported through SFA funding or other income streams will be delivered at the Full Cost rate.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The setting of adult education fees is a difficult task, involving a balance between the need to generate sufficient income to meet costs, while encouraging adult learners to participate. Any significant increase in fees is likely to be unpopular and could lead to some fall-off in student numbers. In the current climate the service wishes to support as many residents as possible to participate in learning and to improve their skills and therefore it is recommended that there is no increase in fees at the current time

8. APPENDICES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST, IN THE MEMBERS LIBRARY AND ON-LINE

Appendix 1 Current and proposed fees for Academic year 2012-2013

Appendix 2 Government contribution for learners

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

10. CONTACT OFFICER

Maggie Heaps

1.1 Appendix 1

ADULT EDUCATION: FEE STRUCTURE 2011/2012 and Proposed 2012-2013

COURSE FEES

		2011-2012		2012-2013	
		Full	Remitted	Full	Remitted
Vocational and Non-Voc First Steps	30 weeks	£105	£10	£105	£10
PCDL	30 weeks	£150	£15	£150	£15

100 % fee remission will be given to students in the following categories at the time they enroll, **provided that they show documentary evidence at the time of enrolling or at the first class:-**

- Unemployed on active benefits
- In receipt of Employment Support Allowance (work related activity group)
- Aged 16-18 on 31st August 2012
- 19-23 studying for a first full level 2 or 3 qualification
- 19-23 studying for a level 1 qualification

100% fee remission will also be given to students on Vocational and First Step courses on any state benefit providing they are unemployed and seeking employment

No course fees will be charged for Hartlepool Borough resident students who:-

- (a) enroll for basic skills courses i.e. literacy and numeracy
- (b) enroll for certain designated courses as part of Widening participation and regeneration
- (c) are part of a target client group on designated courses.

Government Contributions for Learners aged 19 years and older

2012/13	Unemployed on active benefits or wider offer to unemployed	19-23 year old	Classroom based		Workplace learning Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Less than 250 employees		Workplace learning Large employer* 250 employees or more	
			24+, without a first Level 2	24+ qualified to Level 2 or above	24+, without a first Level 2	24+ qualified to Level 2 or above	24+, without a first Level 2	24+ qualified to Level 2 or above
Stand alone units Excluding Basic Skills	Fully funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded
Basic Skills English and maths (see Annex 2 para 19)	Fully funded	Fully funded	Fully funded	Fully funded	Fully funded	Fully funded	Fully funded	Fully funded
ESOL (see Annex 2 para 20)	Fully funded	Co-funded (classroom)	Co-funded	Co-funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded
		Not funded (workplace)						
Progression Funding (Entry & Level 1 vocational and PSD aims)	Fully funded	Fully funded* (classroom)	Co-funded	Co-funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded
		Fully funded* (vocational Level 1 only, workplace)						
Full Level 2	Fully funded	Fully funded (for those without a Level 2)	Co-funded	Co-funded	Co-funded	Co-funded	Not funded	Not funded
		Co-funded (with Level 2 or above, classroom)						
		Co-funded (with Level 2 or above, workplace SME only, otherwise not funded in workplace)						
Other Level 2	Fully funded	Co-funded (classroom)	Co-funded	Co-funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded
		Not funded (workplace)						

* Fully funded if the Learner has not attained Level 2 and needs the additional step up from basic skills in order to progress to a full Level 2, otherwise co-funded

* Large employer in the context of eligibility (reduction in funding still applies to employer with 1,000 employees or more)

2012/13	Unemployed on active benefits or wider offer to unemployed	19-24 year old	Classroom based		Workplace learning Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Less than 250 employees		Workplace learning Large employer* 250 employees or more	
			25+, without a first Level 2	25+ qualified to Level 2 or above	25+, without a first Level 2	25+ qualified to Level 2 or above	25+, without a first Level 2	25+ qualified to Level 2 or above
Full Level 3	Fully funded	Fully funded (for those without a Level 3)						
		Co-funded (with Level 3 or above, classroom)	Co-funded	Co-funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded
		Not funded (with Level 3 or above, workplace)						
Other Level 3	Fully funded	Co-funded (classroom)	Co-funded	Co-funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded
		Not funded (workplace)						
Full Level 4* or above ⁴⁰	Fully funded	Fully funded (for those without a Level 3)						
		Co-funded (with Level 3 or above, classroom)	Co-funded	Co-funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded	Not funded
		Not funded (with Level 3 or above, workplace)						
Apprenticeships (all Levels)	Not funded	Co-funded (workplace)	Not funded	Not funded	Co-funded	Co-funded	Co-funded	Co-funded

* Large employer in the context of eligibility (reduction in funding still applies to employer with 1,000 employees or more).

* Learning aims at Diploma level

⁴⁰ Non-prescribed HE only

CHILDREN'S AND COMMUNITY SERVICES REPORT

10th July 2012



Report of: Assistant Director (Community Services)

Subject: PROPOSED REGULAR CAR BOOT EVENTS AT
HARTLEPOOL'S MARITIME EXPERIENCE

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

1.1 This is a non key decision.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 Nobles Promotions Ltd have made Culture & Information Services a financial offer to hold a weekly car boot sale at Hartlepool's Maritime Experience. Permission is requested to accept this offer and implement an appropriate contract.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 In September 2011 Cultural Services held a car boot event at Hartlepool's Maritime Experience; this was a small event but showed potential for future success and generated positive feedback from the public relating to having a car boot event in this location.

3.2 Further car boot events were held in March and April 2012 after a winter break. Both were unsuccessful and did not generate sellers to the event, though the office did receive calls from interested buyers. The low turn-out could be attributed to the service's lack of resources to do a mass marketing campaign on the same scale of other car boot event organisers in the region.

3.3 As there is some interest and the service is required to maximise income generation it is believed that a good option would be to offer the site to a private car boot event organiser. This would generate a guaranteed income into the Hartlepool's Maritime Experience budget. Following this option, Nobles Promotions Ltd, who are believed to be the biggest car boot event organiser in the region, were approached to determine if there would be any interest to run a car boot event on the site.

- 3.4 Nobles Promotions Ltd visited the site, were very impressed and made an offer to run a weekly car boot event on the site for a proposed fee. The car boot event would take up approximately 1/3 of the HME car park thus leaving adequate parking space for Museum of Hartlepool and HME customers. Because this is an outdoor event, it was indicated that the car boot event would close in the winter months – it would end just before Christmas and begin again in March. As part of their offer they will undertake all marketing and press activity; fully staff the site and provide infrastructure.
- 3.5 The car boot event would form part of the Department's events programme and run each Saturday morning 08:00hrs to 13:00hrs.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The proposal before Portfolio is to allow acceptance of the offer received to test the market for one year as a trial for both parties. This will allow us to be better informed and to effectively test the market. This in turn will enable a better chance of securing a good income stream once the trial is complete and the event is established and we will then seek long term quotes. Advice from the Procurement team has been sought.

5. RISK IMPLICATIONS

Public Protection have raised concerns on two grounds:

- a) *That a car boot sale within 6.6 miles of the current town centre market may conflict with the Market Charter.* Legal advice has been sought on this (please see Legal Consideration of this report). Also, there has been a weekly car boot sale running at the Mayfair Centre for some time without affecting the current town centre market. The Mayfair Centre is only 3.4 miles from the town centre, Public Protection consented to this car boot event taking place.
- b) *That the car boot sellers may require individual Street Trading Licences.* Nobles Promotions Ltd will enclose the car boot site and will charge an entry fee to it which removes the need for Street Trading Licences.

5.2 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Based on the weekly offer that Nobles Promotions Ltd has made to use the site this could generate an income, the size of which is dependent upon how regular the event would be over the course of 12 months. This would benefit both 12/13 and 13/14 financial years. Other than providing the site for use, the Council will not be contributing any financial resource into the agreement. Nobles Promotions Ltd will provide all marketing, staffing, infrastructure and site cleansing.

5.3 LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Legal advice given in relation to the Market Charter is as follows:

'A local authority generally can seek the 'protections' of operating such a market either through a grant by way of a Royal Charter or through reliance on the Food and Drugs legislation (The Food Act 1984 allows the establishment of a new market but not to take over an existing one). Either way, this allows an action against any rival market operating within a six and two third miles radius of the established market. Obviously we would seek to protect our market traders against a rival operating; particularly at the same time and within such a radius, where any damage i.e. loss of takings does not need to be proved. A rival market on a different day would need some evidence of detriment to traders.'

A License Agreement would be put in place between Hartlepool Borough Council and Nobles Promotions to cover all the necessary indemnities against the Council and to stipulate how Nobles Promotions Ltd could use the site. There would be clearly written clauses in this License Agreement that would prohibit Nobles Promotions Ltd from allowing 'market stall traders' operating within the car boot event. As an integral part of the licence, Nobles Promotions Ltd, Legal and Public Protection will have an opportunity to give feedback on the clauses. The License Agreement will be reviewed annually, this will provide the opportunity to make any relevant changes to further minimise any impact on the town centre market.

5.4 STAFF CONSIDERATIONS

Culture & Information Services do not currently have the staffing capacity to market and manage a regular car boot event on the same scale as a private event organiser. The potential of additional earned income for the HME site will help to safeguard the financial health of the HME and in turn safeguard jobs. The site is heavily reliant on earning substantial income to support its revenue budget.

5.5 ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Weekly car boot sales will be included in Hartlepool's Maritime Experience events programme, in the same way as the monthly Farmers Market, and will be used to attract visitors and increase footfall to Hartlepool's Maritime Experience and the Museum of Hartlepool.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 It is recommended that permission is granted to enter into an agreement with Nobles Promotion Ltd for a one year trial period to hold car boot events at Hartlepool's Maritime Experience.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Entering into such an agreement will generate income which is much greater than could be achieved by Culture & Information Services delivering a similar event in-house on current resources and will contribute a guaranteed weekly site fee to the revenue income of Hartlepool's Maritime Experience.

8. CONTACT OFFICER

John Mennear, Assistant Director (Community Services)
Child & Adult Services, Community Services
Hartlepool Borough Council

01429 523417
john.mennear@hartlepool.gov.uk

CHILDREN'S AND COMMUNITY SERVICES REPORT

10th July 2012



Report of: Director of Child and Adult Services

Subject: SCHOOL TERM AND HOLIDAY DATES:
SCHOOL YEAR 2013/14

1. TYPE OF DECISION

Non-key decision.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To seek the agreement of the Portfolio Holder to the pattern of school term and holiday dates for the school year 2013/14 for community and controlled schools in Hartlepool.

To seek the agreement of the Portfolio Holder in recommending those dates to the governing bodies of aided and foundation schools in Hartlepool.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 As the local authority (LA), the Council has the responsibility for setting the school term and holiday dates for community and controlled schools in Hartlepool. Aided and foundation school governing bodies are responsible for setting their own school holiday pattern within the agreed national framework of working days. Traditionally the LA and the governing bodies of all the aided and foundation schools work together to ensure a consistent pattern across the town in respect of school term and holiday dates, though in the case of Roman Catholic schools in particular, some variation does occur in some years.
- 3.2 The pattern proposed for 2013/14 provides for an “envelope” of 195 days, five days are designated by the school as Professional Development (PD) days. Five PD days are provided for in the Conditions of Service and can be taken in combinations of part-day “twilight” sessions at the direction of individual schools.

- 3.3 Regional consultation has taken place. The local authorities in the North East region are committed to achieving broad consistency across the region when considering the school year pattern for 2013/14 and subsequent years.
- 3.4 The Local Government Association (LGA) is attempting to achieve an overall national consensus based on a number of principles:
- To start the school year on a September date as near as possible to 1st September;
 - To equalise teaching and learning blocks (roughly 2x7 and 4x6 weeks);
 - To establish a two week spring break in early April irrespective of the incidence of the Easter bank holiday;

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 In the Autumn term 2011, North East LA representatives discussed the school year pattern for 2013/14 which had been recommended by the Local Government Association and it was agreed that on proposal for 2013/14 term dates set out in Appendix 1 be consulted on with a slight alteration to the dates recommended by the LGA in order that a two week break at Christmas 2013 can be achieved.
- 4.2 Following that discussion, arrangements were made to consult all Head teachers in Hartlepool and also the relevant associations/unions through the Director's termly meetings.
- 4.3 In response to the consultation, head teachers of some primary and secondary schools responded to give their support to the dates, and English Martyrs Roman Catholic School suggested that Governors adopt the broad outline of the 2013/14 schedule.
- 4.4 Once the local consultation had taken place, the consensus from the LAs in the region was to adopt the model **Appendix 1**.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The Portfolio Holder is requested to consider the following recommendations:
- To approve the schedule of term and holiday dates for 2013/14 for community and controlled schools in Hartlepool as shown in **Appendix 1**.
 - To recommend the schedule of term and holiday dates for 2013/14 to the governing bodies of aided and foundation schools in Hartlepool as shown in **Appendix 1**.

6. APPENDICES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST, IN THE MEMBERS LIBRARY AND ON-LINE

Appendix 1 proposed term dates for 2013/14 Academic Year.

7. CONTACT OFFICER

Ann Turner, Governor Support Officer, Child and Adult Services
(telephone 523766, email ann.turner@hartlepool.gov.uk).

Proposed Term Dates for the 2013/2014 Academic Year

195 DAY ENVELOPE

2013	September						October						November						December					
Monday		2	9	16	23	30		7	14	21	28			4	11	18	25			2	9	16	23	30
Tuesday		3	10	17	24		1	8	15	22	29			5	12	19	26			3	10	17	24	31
Wednesday		4	11	18	25		2	9	16	23	30			6	13	20	27			4	11	18	25	
Thursday		5	12	19	26		3	10	17	24	31			7	14	21	28			5	12	19	26	
Friday		6	13	20	27		4	11	18	25			1	8	15	22	29			6	13	20	27	
Saturday		6	13	20	27		5	12	19	26			2	9	16	23	30			7	14	21	28	
Sunday	1	8	15	22	29		6	13	20	27			3	10	17	24			1	8	15	22	29	

Bank Holiday

Holiday

2014	January					February					March					April					
Monday		6	13	20	27		3	10	17	24		3	10	17	24	31		7	14	21	28
Tuesday		7	14	21	28		4	11	18	25		4	10	18	25		1	8	15	22	29
Wednesday	1	8	15	22	29		5	12	19	26		5	12	19	26		2	9	16	23	30
Thursday	2	9	16	23	30		6	13	20	27		6	13	20	27		3	10	17	24	
Friday	3	10	17	24	31		7	14	21	28		7	14	21	28		4	11	18	25	
Saturday	4	11	18	25		1	8	15	22		1	8	15	22	29		5	12	19	26	
Sunday	5	12	19	26		2	9	16	23		2	9	16	23	30		6	13	20	27	

2014	May					June					July					August					
Monday		5	12	19	26		2	9	16	23	30		7	14	21	28		4	11	18	25
Tuesday		6	13	20	27		3	10	17	24		1	8	15	22	29		5	12	19	26
Wednesday		7	14	21	28		4	11	18	25		2	9	16	23	30		6	13	20	27
Thursday	1	8	15	22	29		5	12	19	26		3	10	17	24	31		7	14	21	28
Friday	2	9	16	23	30		6	13	20	27		4	11	18	25		1	8	15	22	29
Saturday	3	10	17	24	31		7	14	21	28		5	12	19	26		2	9	16	23	30
Sunday	4	11	18	25		1	8	15	22	29		6	13	20	27		3	10	17	24	31

The number of term days shown is **195** days. Up to **5** of these days will be used as professional development days for teachers, pupils will not attend on these days. Each school determines when these take place and will inform parents.

CHILD AND ADULT SERVICES DEPARTMENT



CHILDREN'S AND COMMUNITY SERVICES REPORT

10th July 2012



Report of: Director of Children's Services

Subject: ROSSMERE CHILDREN'S CENTRE OFSTED
INSPECTION

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

Non key – For information only

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 For the Portfolio Holder to note the inspection report and outcome for Rossmere Children's Centre Ofsted inspection.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 places a duty on local authorities to provide children's centres to all families with children under five years old. Children's centres provide families with, or make arrangements for them to have access to:

- early learning and childcare
- family support
- health services
- support into employment
- other specialist services

- 3.2 The children's centres are now part of the Early Intervention Service which offers services for children aged 0-19 and their families. These ensure that families are supported effectively.

4. OFSTED PROCESS

- 4.1 Two Ofsted inspectors spent time in Rossmere Children's Centre of the week beginning 5th March 2012. The inspectors spent one day reviewing paperwork and two days interviewing parents, stakeholders and attending sessions. Feedback on the outcome was given at the end of the third day.

5. OUTCOMES AND AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 The overall outcome for the inspection was good with safeguarding rated as outstanding. The full report is attached in appendix 1. The main findings stated:

“The centre is well regarded in the local community and by partners and provides good services, resulting in good and improving outcomes for families in most areas. A typical comment was “the centre has had a massive impact on my family life. You always feel welcome and I now find I’m much better at talking to other people and my child.” Outcomes are good and year on year the gap between those who achieve well and others is narrowing.”

- 5.2 The recommendations for further improvement were as follows:

- Enhance the effectiveness of self evaluation through a fuller analysis of data trends, from this, identify summary judgments that will fully support the grades in the self evaluation;
- Improve the recording of children’s progress in learning and development activities to enhance further planning for their individual needs;
- Review the composition and operation of the advisory board to increase parents’ involvement and influence in decision making.

6. ACTION PLAN

- 6.1 An action plan addressing the areas for further improvement has been developed and is attached as appendix 2.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 For the Portfolio Holder to note the inspection report and outcome for Rossmere Children’s Centre Ofsted inspection.

8. APPENDICES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST, IN THE MEMBERS LIBRARY AND ON-LINE

Appendix 1 Rossmere Children’s Centre Inspection Report

Appendix 2 Rossmere Children’s Centre Inspection Action Plan

9. CONTACT OFFICER

Danielle Swainston, Head of Access and Strategic Planning,
danielle.swainston@hartlepool.gov.uk 01429 523671

ROSSMERE CHILDREN'S CENTRE POST OFSTED INSPECTION PLAN APRIL 2012

Objective	Action	Milestones	Person/s responsible	Progress
Improve the recording of children's progress in learning and development activities to enhance planning for their individual needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate methodology for tracking child's progress in universal groups to inform next steps. Embed tracking of children in subsidised childcare Embed tracking of child's developmental improvement for families in family support Implement E-CAF system to better assess and track need 	<p>December 2012</p> <p>December 2012</p> <p>December 2012</p> <p>September 2012</p>	<p>GS/ EYC</p> <p>GS/FISH/EYC</p> <p>GS/FSW</p> <p>EIG team</p>	<p>'Smile books' implemented in interim</p> <p>Termly meeting with childcare providers established.</p> <p>E-CAF training planned 'Smile books' implemented in interim</p> <p>E-CAF training planned.</p>
Strengthen governance to ensure parents are empowered to contribute to the governance of the centre through meaningful representation on the advisory board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review composition of advisory board Support parents attending the parents forum to attend and positively contribute to the advisory board Identify support needs for parents attending the advisory board (training programme) 	<p>September 2012</p> <p>September 2012</p> <p>September 2012</p>	<p>GS/Advisory board</p> <p>FSW</p> <p>FSW</p>	<p>Membership composition reviewed Meeting format reviewed.</p> <p>Parents forum consultation ongoing</p> <p>Volunteer programme in place</p>
Enhance the effectiveness of self evaluation through a fuller analysis of data to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review data evaluation systems currently in place 	September 2012	GS/FISH	Families Information and Support Hub responsible for Performance

3.1 APPENDIX 1

ensure the consistent longer term evaluation of the impact of all services delivered through the centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that data evaluation informs summative judgements 	October 2012	GS	Management Framework and supply of quarterly data.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use summative judgements to redesign activities/services 	December 2012	GS/ Advisory board	

Inspection report for Rossmere and St Teresa's Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	384141
Inspection dates	6-7 March 2012
Reporting inspector	Fred Brown

Centre leader	Mrs Gillian Slimings
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Rossmere Way Hartlepool TS25 5EB
Telephone number	01429 292444
Fax number	01429 292445
Email address	gillian.slimings@hartlepool.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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Introduction

The inspection covers the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one Early Years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with managers, staff, volunteers, users and partners. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Rossmere and St Teresa's Sure Start Children's Centre is a Phase One centre and was first designated as delivering the full core offer of services in October 2004. It offers services in health, midwifery, speech and language therapy, family support, employment and benefit advice, childminder support, play opportunities, volunteering opportunities and a community cafe. The centre is located alongside Rossmere Primary School, St Teresa's Roman Catholic Primary School, and a youth centre, and acts as the hub for the south locality in Hartlepool. The centre targets families mainly from the Owton and Rossmere wards.

Most children enter Early Years education with a range of skills lower than expected for their age. Visitor numbers have increased from 852 in November 2009/10 to 956 in February 2012. Recent data show that, in February 2012, 816 of the 1045 children under five living in the reach area are registered with the centre. Around 550 of the children attending schools are entitled to free school meals, which is 30.2% of all children in the reach area. The proportion of children aged under five living in households where no-one is working, is 10.92%. About one third of families in the Owton ward receive income benefits. The vast majority of families is White British.

The advisory board is made up of representatives from the local community, partner professionals and parents. The Integration Support Manager manages the day-to-day running of the centre and its staff, under the direction of the local authority.

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

2

Main findings

The centre is well-regarded in the local community and by partners and provides good services, resulting in good and improving outcomes for families in most areas. A typical comment was 'the centre has had a massive impact on my family life. You always feel welcome and I now find I'm much better at talking to other people and to my child.' Outcomes are good and year-on-year the gap between those who achieve well and others is narrowing. Effective measures are used to improve children's communication and language skills and their personal and emotional development. There is good early identification of children who need additional support. There are good initiatives to reduce child obesity rates, to improve breastfeeding rates and children's behaviour. The centre's workers focus their efforts and resources on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable families.

The strong concentration on trying to engage the most deprived families, particularly in the Owton ward, has led to particularly good levels of participation by teenage parents and lone parents. The centre has successfully increased participation by isolated children and families through well-integrated and collaborative working with partners. Partnerships contribute well to improving outcomes and access to additional services for children and users. Parents are referred to and benefit from good opportunities for further training and advice on benefits and employment. Several have become active volunteers and some use this experience to find jobs. Close working relationships with childcare and Early Years education providers are improving children's learning and development. Learning activities are evaluated well with good feedback from users. The recording of children's progress in learning and play activities is not sufficiently thorough.

Services are delivered in an inclusive environment and there is good promotion of equality and diversity. A very high priority is given to creating a safe environment for children and users. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding and informed by excellent measures to ensure that all participants understand their responsibilities. Good strategic leadership and supportive management provide a clear steer for highly-motivated staff. The centre is managed particularly well and staff feel well-supported. The advisory board meets quarterly to review the self-evaluation, but attendance by parents is sporadic, they contribute little and they are not sufficiently involved in making decisions. Self-evaluation accurately

assesses the quality of provision and makes extensive use of good quality data. Data trends are quoted in detail, but there is insufficient summary analysis of the key messages that can be drawn from these data to support the grades awarded. There is good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Enhance the effectiveness of self-evaluation through a fuller analysis of data trends, from this, identify summary judgements that will fully support the grades in the self-evaluation.
- Improve the recording of children's progress in learning and development activities to enhance further planning for their individual needs.
- Review the composition and operation of the advisory board to increase parents' involvement and influence in decision-making.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Centre workers work well with health visitors, midwives and speech and language therapists to offer a wide range of activities to promote healthy lifestyles and well-being for children and their parents. Families learn the importance of healthy eating and the dangers of childhood obesity through short, practical, motivational courses. An extensive programme for new mothers on the benefits of breastfeeding has led to a steady increase in the numbers starting, but figures for sustaining breastfeeding remain low. Increasing numbers attend ante-natal and baby clinics and feeding groups. Parents attending weaning clinics are much more aware of how to promote dental hygiene and avoid oversized portions. Teenage pregnancy rates in the area have fallen considerably. The use of incentives, including vouchers that can be exchanged for fruit and vegetables, helps reduce the numbers of parents who smoke during pregnancy.

The centre is a very safe place and users consider security arrangements to be excellent. Children consistently behave in ways that are safe for themselves and others and learn how to recognise dangers and manage risks safely through play. Parents develop the confidence and skills through successful parenting programmes to manage their children's behaviour and to keep them very safe. Children are extremely well-protected by the effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and intervention takes place before situations become threatening. Increased numbers of children are subject to child protection plans and there is sustained evidence that their outcomes are good. Families learn how to reduce risks to children in their homes and develop an excellent understanding of safety in the home through training and home safety checks. Large numbers of families attending the centre have the confidence to share any concerns with staff. The number of incidents of domestic violence affecting children referred to panels has declined from 15 in 2009 to three by April 2011.

Outcomes for children and parents involved in learning, play and recreational activities are good and they make good progress. They have lots of fun and bond well together and parents discover how children learn through play. In play workshops children become more confident, learn new skills and explore new materials creatively. Children are well-prepared for nursery school. They make good progress and improve their personal, social and emotional skills with the Rossmere area showing the highest level of improvement in the local authority area. Programmes, including home visits, supported by the speech therapist, to help reduce delays in children's development of speech and communication skills have reduced numbers by over 10% between 2010 and 2011. The gap between the lowest 20% and the average in the Early Years Foundation Stage has reduced from 35% in 2009 to 27% in 2011, although girls still perform much better than boys.

Parents and users feel well-supported by the centre's strong culture of mutual respect. Children learn to take their turn and show respect for others. Parents are regularly encouraged to suggest improvements to services, to evaluate learning and development activities and are consulted on new developments. A steering group of local users helped decide what provision was needed at the new Golden Flatts Bungalow centre. Actions from recommendations are reported back to users. Increasing numbers of users become volunteers as a result of their positive engagement in centre activities and some run activities which are no longer funded, such as the 'Little 'Uns' group, as a way of sustaining them.

The centre supports multi-agency approaches to engaging parents and users to take up further training or to seek financial or benefits advice. Many initiatives through partners are targeted at harder-to-reach users who do not yet have the skills needed to seek work. Good advice is available to parents on debt management and to check whether they are receiving their full entitlement to benefits and tax credits. Advice and referrals take place either in the centre or through home visits. The excellent volunteer training programme has enabled more than 50 parents from the local area to become confident enough to progress to further training or employment. Over 10 work as volunteers in the centre each week. About six have moved on to paid jobs at the centre. The centre does not yet keep records of the progression of users when they leave the centre and is unable to assess the benefits of further training to the families.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2

The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships, and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre meets the needs of targeted groups well. Along with its partners it is very effective at assessing the individual needs of the children and families who use its services and providing well-coordinated support. Partners share their local knowledge to identify the needs, particularly of the more vulnerable groups, accurately. Parenting needs are assessed thoroughly. The centre has significantly increased its registration of families and over 80% of the 462 attending in February 2012 are from its most deprived areas. It has been particularly successful in engaging teenage parents and lone parents.

The centre is good at promoting learning and encouraging children to progress. Parents are given good opportunities to further develop their parenting skills. 'I really enjoy the group and am a load more confident to have a go at home', is a typical comment from a parent. Sessions are targeted at children or mothers at particular stages of their development. There is a strong focus on the development of children's speech, communication, play and social and behavioural skills. The quality of sessions is generally good. However, the tracking of children's progress in learning and the keeping of detailed case records to personalise support is underdeveloped.

The quality of care and support for all centre users is good. Children and families receive good guidance on choices to be made. Families in crisis are strongly supported by multi-agency teams who identify needs early before identifying an appropriate key worker to develop personalised support plans. Families are supported in attending appointments for help with health, medical or benefits advice. Portage arrangements are offered to all families in need who feel unable to attend the centre. Children who are looked after by others are well-supported so that they can continue to be involved in activities. Disabled children and those with special educational needs receive well-coordinated individual support. Families are signposted well to other services and there is a range of good quality information.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Strong strategic leadership provides a clear steer for highly-motivated staff in the centre. The centre's manager is highly supportive and inspires staff to produce good-quality services for all users. Very close collaborative working between the children's centre, health services, social care, local schools and the voluntary sector supports co-ordinated approaches to tackling issues. The centre prioritises the need to engage families living in the most deprived areas. There is stringent monitoring of progress towards targets using accurate data. These data provide valuable information on trends but the provider does not always identify what the key messages are.

The advisory board is partly successful in monitoring the work of the centre, but it has yet to find appropriate ways to engage parents. Parents are more successfully involved in the parents' forum and this gives them an opportunity to evaluate services with good support from a facilitator. The centre recognises the need to strengthen parents' influence on the development of its activities.

All staff and volunteers benefit from a range of high-quality training and support in their work. Self-evaluation is used mostly well to determine priorities for further development and progress towards tackling these is carefully monitored. Outcomes for almost all users of the centre are good and improving. The centre uses its resources well, fulfils all of its statutory duties and provides good value for money. The two centres are close to primary schools and are in the heart of their communities. They offer high-quality resources and facilities for parents and children.

Equality is promoted at all levels and this is supported by the inclusion of all children and their families. Cookery activities encourage very young children to discover different tastes and menus. The centre offers good support to disabled children and vulnerable two-year-olds. The gap between the lowest 20% of children's Early Years Foundation Stage scores and the Hartlepool average is successfully being narrowed.

Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is given the highest priority, procedures are particularly robust and practice is exemplary. Local authority policies on safe recruitment are followed stringently. Rigorous Criminal Records Bureau checks on staff and volunteers are reviewed every three years. The centre works very effectively with partner agencies to protect children, including disabled children, and vulnerable parents. The numbers of hospital admissions following accidental injuries to children have reduced in the last year. All staff, volunteers and partners receive regular training, have a thorough knowledge of safeguarding and child-protection procedures and are confident in using them. There are excellent protocols for referring and sharing information between relevant agencies and the family support worker plays a key role in assuring this. Very good advice and access to expert help and protection is given to those experiencing domestic violence. The centre promotes the safety and welfare of all centre users. Users understand their rights and responsibilities and appreciate the secure space that enables them to discuss any concerns.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision.	2

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Rossmere and St Teresa's Sure Start Children's Centre on 6 March 2012. We judged that this is a good centre overall. A significant strength is the commitment from the centre and its arrangements to keep children and families safe. We judged this aspect as outstanding. The centre provides you with a very safe place where you can be sure to receive a warm, friendly welcome. As part of the inspection, we observed a number of activities, held meetings, looked at the centre's documents and talked with a number of children, parents, volunteers, staff, community representatives and partners.

We would like to thank all the people who spoke to us during our visit. Many of you told us what you thought about the centre and its activities. Your views were very helpful. Everyone we spoke to was full of praise for the centre and its staff. These are some of the typical things that parents said. 'The centre has made me feel much less isolated. I now feel as though I have someone to talk to and people listen.' 'I became a volunteer after I had my child because I wanted to give something back.'

So that more families can benefit from the types of service you are receiving, we have asked the centre to make it easier for parents to influence decisions made about what the centre does and the activities it offers. Also they should keep better records of the progress your children make in activities. Managers collect excellent data on the work of the centre, but they could do more to clarify what these data are telling them about how well they are doing.

The centre has done a lot to help parents stop smoking, to help reduce child obesity and to help improve children's speech before they get to reception year. We hope this work will continue to be successful.

The manager knows your community very well and is very enthusiastic about helping you improve your lives. You told us that all staff and volunteers work hard to involve your children in enjoyable and stimulating activities. You particularly like the play sessions where you can join in. We know that the centre's work in helping you improve the safety of your children at home and in the community is outstanding. Because of their work with partners they have helped you improve your children's behaviour and their speech and language. Health workers, social care workers and voluntary organisations work closely with centre staff to provide good services to meet all of your family needs. The links with health professionals are good and are making it much easier for you to attend ante-natal sessions and baby clinics and to gain useful information about breastfeeding and how to keep your children healthy. You value the advice you get on how to deal with your child's behaviour.

Some of the work in the community is very successful in helping parents who find it difficult to come to the centre or who do not know who to ask for help. Some parents have enjoyed the chance to attend training to learn employability skills that might help them get jobs in the future when opportunities come up. They value the advice they get on benefits and on how to manage their money. Your children have good opportunities to learn and develop through the wide range of activities available. They become more confident and are getting ready for school. They make good progress in developing their skills for the future. The care, guidance and support offered by the centre are very good, especially for families who need extra help.

Thank you again for coming to talk to us. We enjoyed visiting your centre and wish you and your families our best wishes for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

CHILDREN'S AND COMMUNITY SERVICES PORTFOLIO

10 July 2012



Report of: Director of Child and Adult Services

Subject: REPORT ON FAMILY PLACEMENT PANEL
ACTIVITY

1. TYPE OF DECISION/APPLICABLE CATEGORY

Non Key – For information only

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The report (**Appendix 1**) will allow the Portfolio Holder to be appraised of the progress and activity of the Hartlepool Adoption and Fostering Panel.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The National Minimum Standards 2011 for both fostering and adoption require that the Adoption and Fostering Panel provides quality assurance feedback regarding the quality of reports presented to Panel and that the service provides written reports to enable the executive side of the local authority to monitor the management and outcomes of the service.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The report details the activities of the Adoption and Fostering Panel and references the execution of its quality assurance role. It highlights the fact that the fostering and adoption service is meeting the required timescales and that there are justifiable reasons when these are not met. The report concludes that the main priorities for the coming year are the maintenance of an effective panel. The family Placement Panel has a crucial role in ensuring the Council meets its statutory obligations in relation to the government Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay which is intended to address delay for children within the adoption system and improve outcomes for children.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 That the Portfolio notes the report of the activities of the Adoption and Fostering Panel, the council's performance in this area and the priorities for action.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Fostering and Adoption are key statutory functions of Children's Social Care and as such it is essential that portfolio holder has information in relation to the council's performance in this area.

7. APPENDIX AVAILABLE ON REQUEST, IN THE MEMBERS LIBRARY AND ON-LINE

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay- Department for Education
Adoption National Minimum Standards 2011
Fostering national Minimum Standards 2011

9. CONTACT OFFICER

Jane Young
Head of Service
Specialist Service
Child and Adult Service

**REPORT ON THE ACTIVITY OF
THE HARTLEPOOL ADOPTION AND FOSTERING PANEL
2011-12**

Introduction

This report has been produced in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for both adoption and fostering which require written reports to be produced on the management and outcomes of the agency including the activity of the Panel and presented to the executive side of the local authority

Adoption: National Minimum Standards 2011 (Standards 17 & 25) require that Adoption Panels provide a quality assurance feedback to the agency every 6 months on the quality of reports being presented to Panel.

Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011 (Standard 14 & 25) requires that Panel provides a quality assurance feedback to the fostering service provider on the quality of reports being presented to Panel.

This report will enable the executive side of the local authority to 'monitor and the management and outcomes of the services in order to satisfy themselves that the service/agency is effective and achieving good outcomes for children.'

PANEL INFORMATION

The year 2011/12 commenced with Hartlepool continuing to run two separate Panels for adoption and fostering on the second and fourth Thursday respectively each month.

Yvonne Hamilton has held the post of Panel Chair of the Fostering Panel since April 2011 and in January 2012 she commenced as Panel Chair for the Adoption Panel in anticipation of the setting up of a joint Panel. The proposal to merge the two Panels was made in order to provide a greater degree of flexibility and to ensure quoracy.

A Joint Panel training day was held on 19 January 2012 and this was well attended by members of both Panels. The training day raised awareness of the differences and the similarities of the issues affecting the two different functions. The Panels have since then gradually amalgamated and since March 2012 have been dealing with the business of both fostering and adoption in each meeting. Information in the form of handouts and articles has and will continue to be provided for Panel members on new developments and specific issues to assist them in their role.

FOSTERING MATTERS

With regards the fostering business dealt with at Panel the following has been achieved.

With regards to plans for children considered by the Fostering Panel, the plan for long term fostering was recommended for approval for 11 children and there were 10 matches taken to Panel which involved 13 children achieving permanency in their foster placement. Three of the matches involved foster carers from Independent Fostering Agencies.

The number of Foster Carer approvals recommended 1 April 2011 – 31 March 2012 comprised 7 approvals of mainstream carers.

The Form F assessments completed took between 7 months and 2 months (2 took 7 months, 1 took 6 months, 1 took 5 months, 1 took 4 months and 1 took 2 months) to complete which is within the required timescales.

The Panel also recommended approval for the partners of two current foster carers.

In the period 2011 - 2012 the Panel noted the resignation of 4 mainstream carers, and 2 Connected Persons carers.

In respect of the reviews of foster carers the Panel considered the recommendations of 31 reviews. It was noted on more than one occasion that reviews had taken a considerable length of time to be presented to the Panel. It was felt that this could detract from the capacity of the department to ensure that any issues were being dealt with in a timely manner.

ADOPTION MATTERS

In respect of the Adoption Panel business that have come before the Panel the following matters have been considered.

Between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2012 the Council approved 9 couples and 3 single females as adopters to provide permanence for a maximum of 16 children.

Over the course of the year the Adoption Panel recommended the approval of the plan for adoption in the cases of 18 children.

The Panel also recommended the approval of the matches for 17 children with 14 sets of Adopters. Two of these adoptive couples were from another agency and two of the couples were Hartlepool Borough Council Foster Carers.

With regards the approval of adopters the length of time for completion of assessments varied from 3 months to 13 months. With regards the assessments within timescales 1 assessment took 3 months, 2 assessments took 4 months, 3 assessments took 5 months, 2 assessments took 6 months and 2 assessments took 7 months.

For the 2 assessments which exceeded the recommended timescales one assessment took 10 months due to bereavement and one assessment took 13 months due to an issue regarding the couple's older adopted child which needed to be resolved before the assessment could conclude.

With regards the foster carers approved as adopters being matched with children following their approval one was matched the same Panel and one the next Panel meeting. An adopter who had adopted the child's sibling was also matched at the same Panel. With regards other approved adopters who have been matched one couple were matched the following month, one was matched within 2 months and one within 4 months.

The Panel was made aware of one adoptive placement disruption of a boy placed with agency adopters in 2010/11 which arose following the diagnosis of a serious illness of the child shortly after placement and his need for intensive prolonged treatment. This disruption was not considered to have any connection with the matching process and to have been a situation which would not have been possible to predict.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Panel has rigorously contributed to the quality assurance of reports for both the fostering service and the adoption service. The Panel has also made sure that all the necessary information for effective decision making has been made available.

One case relating to seeking approval for an adoption plan was removed from the agenda just prior to Panel because it was felt that the quality of the report and the supporting information was not sufficient to allow proper consideration of the case. This matter was considered at a subsequent Panel when the required amendments had been made.

There has been one instance when the Panel has deferred consideration of a plan for adoption because the additional information in the form and an expert's report had been received without sufficient time for the Panel members to properly digest this before the meeting.

On occasions the Panel has requested that suggested amendments to a report have been made and the report has been resubmitted to Panel with the amendments for Panel to note. Panel has taken

It is felt that the issues of quality relating to Child Permanence Reports may initially have been partly due to the change to the ICS generated form. In order to avoid cases being deferred the agency has adopted a more rigorous quality assurance process and this seems to have been an effective measure.

It must also be acknowledged that there have been some Child Permanence reports which have been of an extremely high standard and this has been noted within the Panel meetings.

With regards Prospective Adopters Reports presented to Panel these have been of a consistently good standard and this too has been remarked upon within Panel.

The quality of Form Fs for new approvals has also been good although there have been some fluctuation in quality of reports presented for matching. The most significant of these fluctuations has been within the reports from Independent Fostering Agencies wherein one was extremely detailed and current and the other lacked some up to date information which had to be provided by the carers to ensure proper consideration.

With regards the functioning of the Panel it has worked well initially in its separate fostering and adoption form but more latterly as a joint Panel. The Panel members have provided a useful and relevant mix of knowledge and experience and they have all been able to contribute to discussions. It is evident that the Panel members feel able to raise any issues they may have and are able to challenge within the meeting.

There has been a change in the process for Panel minutes in order to comply with the new standards which require that the Agency Decision maker has the final set of minutes upon which to make her decisions. After lengthy deliberations the system currently in place allows the minutes to be sent securely to the Panel chair electronically and then delivered by post to the other Panel members for checking prior to the Agency Decision Maker's meeting.

CONCLUSION

It is the opinion of the Panel chair that the Panel has remained child focussed in its outlook and Panel members have all been conscientious in their preparation for and participation in the meetings. The Panel members are committed to undertaking their role well and take their responsibility to the looked after children of Hartlepool very seriously.

It has been noted that there has been a considerable number of children with a plan for adoption coming to Panel for approval. There has also been an increase in the number of adopters and the timescales for assessment completion has been a positive factor.

Given the national trends in adoption there is no doubt that there will continue to be the need for a high volume of adopter assessments being completed and the flexibility of a joint Panel will help to ensure there is the capacity to consider these in a timely manner.

It is hoped that the efforts to address the quality issues with regards Child Permanence reports will continue to reap tangible benefits in terms of achieving more consistently high quality.

With regards the fostering matters the Panel Adviser is meeting with the Independent Reviewing officers to progress discussions regarding streamlining the process concerning reviews.

It is anticipated that the amalgamation of the Panels will reap other benefits in terms of the provision to the looked after children of Hartlepool. The Panel dealing with both fostering and adoption will be in a better position to 'track' the progress of individual cases.

Future Priorities

The Panel will continue to have a crucial function to perform in respect of the independent consideration of the plans for children both in terms of adoption and fostering. The Panel's role in recommending the approval of adopters and foster carers will continue to include ensuring that safe and robust practice is followed.

In addition to this in the coming year the Panel has an important role to undertake in terms of ensuring adherence to the new government timescales for the approval of adopters and the matching of children with adopters.

While there is currently a sizeable pool of Panel members, individual circumstances change and there is an on-going need to extend the pool of Panel members to ensure that there continues to be a sufficient mix of knowledge and experience to fulfil the Panel role in respect of both fostering and adoption.

The agency also needs to ensure that the Panel members are equipped with and update their knowledge of both fostering and adoption research and developments to enable them to make informed and appropriate decisions.

Jacky Yeaman-Vass
Panel Advisor

In collaboration with

Yvonne Hamilton
Hartlepool Adoption and Fostering Panel Chair