

**Children and Young People
Select Committee**

Review of Corporate Parenting



Information Pack

2nd July 2007

Children and Young People Select Committee
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Church Road
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STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CARE

INITIAL BRIEFING REPORT FOR SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON CORPORATE PARENTING

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Currently within Stockton Borough Council there are 186 Looked After Children. Children/young people who are looked after by a local authority are either accommodated, in care or remanded/detained.
- 1.2 Section 20 Accommodation is a voluntary arrangement in which the local authority does not gain personal responsibility and parents are not required to give notice if they wish to remove their child or young person from care.
- 1.3 “In care” means that a court has made the child or young person the subject of a Legal Order. This means that the local authority shares parental responsibility and limits the parents’ exercise of their continuing responsibility.
- 1.4 The local authority has specific authority to detain young people who fall into the third category who may do so as a result of :
- remand by a court following criminal charges
 - detention following arrest by police,
 - or an emergency protection order
- 1.5 Councillors, along with other professionals and agencies within Stockton, are charged with the duty of acting as corporate parents to these children.

2. FACTS ABOUT THE CARE SYSTEM

- 2.1 Looked After Children have historically been significantly disadvantaged by their experiences within the care system. Proportionately, Stockton has fewer Looked After Children per 10,000 than comparator Authorities. This reflects strategies that have been developed within the Authority to divert children from the care system. Research is clear that children are significantly disadvantaged by being Looked After and one of the roles of a corporate parent is to attempt to redress the inequalities that Young people may experience within the looked after system.

Nationally one third of rough sleepers have been in care.

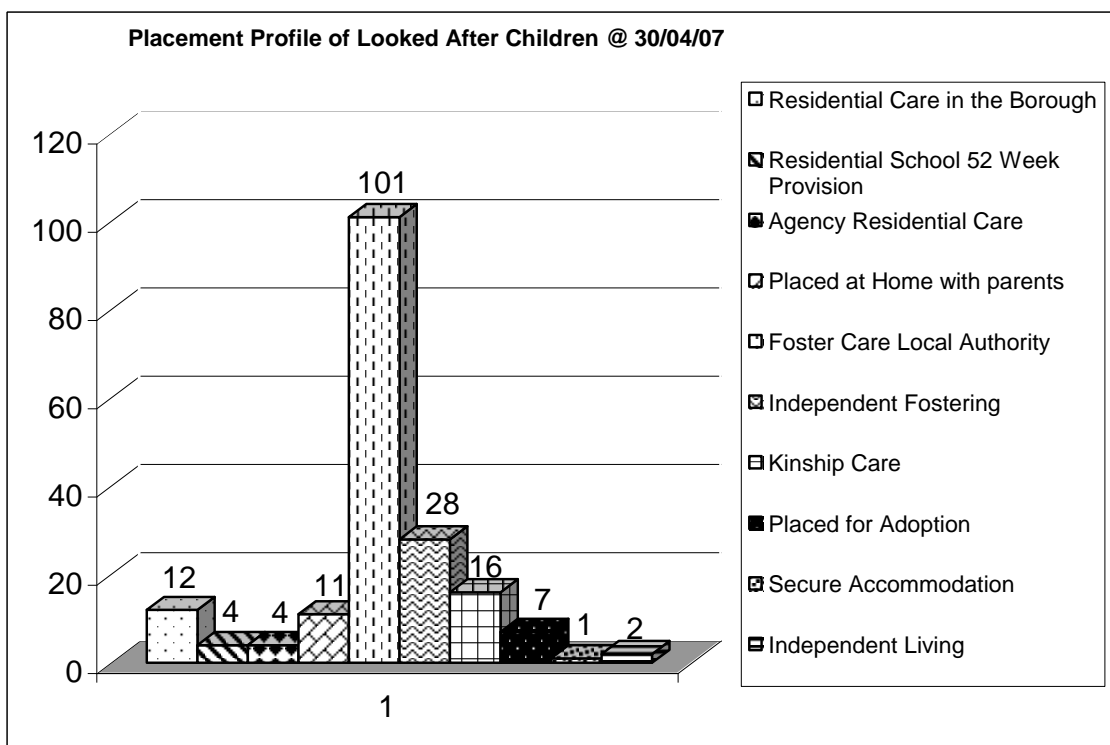
Care leavers are over-represented in prison; one quarter of adults have spent some time in care.

In 2001 – 2002 46% of care leavers were in employment, education or training at age 19 compared to 85% of all 19 year olds.

3. STOCKTON'S LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

- 3.1 Looked After Children are the most vulnerable group within the borough. The majority of children and young people come into care because of neglect, domestic violence or parents' drug related issues. Once in care, they will have a permanence plan, usually agreed after four months, to establish what the likely longer-term outcome is for them. The plan could cover a spectrum of options ranging from an agreed return home or, to an adoptive placement.
- 3.2 As of 30 April 2007 there were 186 Looked After Children in Stockton. Boys were more likely than girls to be Looked After in line with the trend nationally. Of the 186 Looked After Children, 105 are male and 81 are female.
- 3.3 Children from a black and minority ethnic background made up 4.7% of Stockton's Looked After population and 1% of our Looked After Children are disabled.
- 3.4 Historically, statistics show that Stockton's Looked After Children are more likely to come into care at a younger age. The most common reason for children coming into care in Stockton remains neglect, this reflects the national picture. In addition, there are particularly high incidences of domestic violence and drug related issues that contribute to children being brought into care.
- 3.5 The majority of children are placed with foster carers, 85% are in foster care as opposed to 68% in England as a whole.

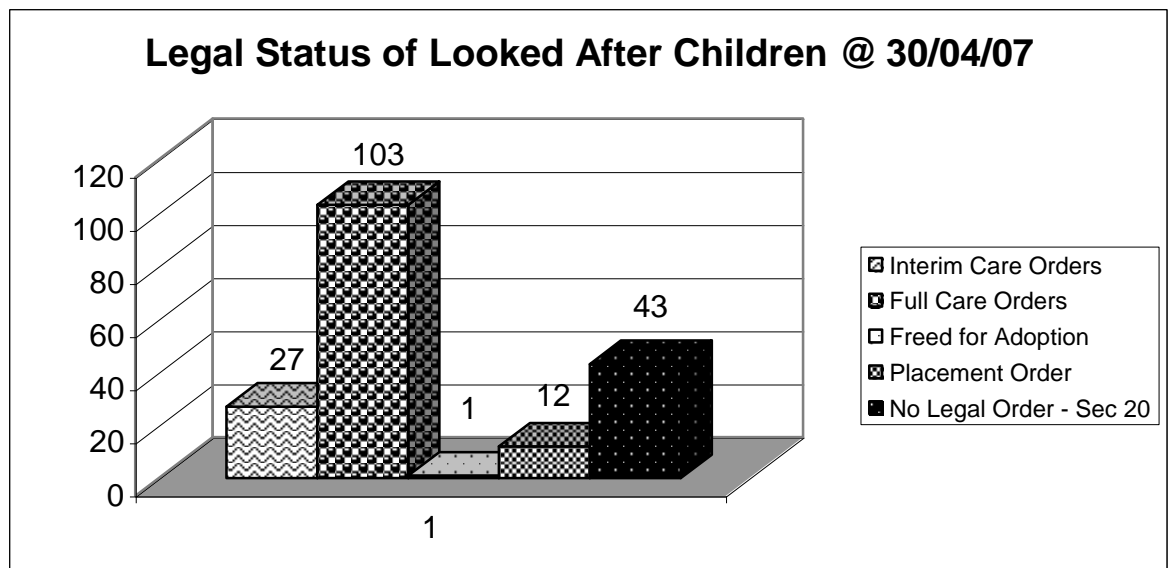
4. PLACEMENT PROFILE OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IN STOCKTON



- 4.1 As reflected in the chart above children and young people are placed in a variety of settings. 18% of children in foster care were placed with Independent Fostering Agencies as we struggle to place within our own resources A further group of children were fostered by relatives or friends. Nationally, 7.8% of children were adopted during the year 2005/2006 whereas in Stockton 9% were adopted in 2005/06. Within the borough we have 3 children's homes which accommodate a total of 12 young people aged 11 to 18 years. In addition some young people are placed in residential school as they require an holistic approach to their educational and care needs. Where young people are presenting extremely challenging behaviour or require specialist support we place them either in a secure setting or specialist residential setting outside the borough.
- 4.2 Children and young people can be returned to the care of their parents when they are on a Legal Order. This is usually at the beginning or end of their care career. They remain the shared responsibility of the local authority and their parents and they continue to be reviewed and supported via the looked after system.

5. LEGAL STATUS OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IN STOCKON

- 5.1 A high percentage of children in the system are subject to Legal Orders. This currently stands at 77%, it is above the national average and reflects the complex nature of family backgrounds and indicates that our stringent gatekeeping means we accommodate children when it is absolutely necessary and when preventative measures have been exhausted.
- 5.2 The graph below indicates the types and range of - of orders of the current looked after population.



6. AGE PROFILE OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IN STOCKTON.

The current age profile as of the 30.4.07 is as follows.

0 to 5year olds	44
6 to 10 year olds	47
11 to 15 year olds	66
16 to 18 year olds	29

7. YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CARE

7.1 The local authority has a duty under the Children(Leaving Care) Act to continue to support young people beyond their 18th birthday. The Youth and Leaving Care Team has a base at Hartington Road Stockton, is currently supporting around 116 young people who are living in a variety of settings. This can include a placement in supported lodgings, within the care leavers hostel, at home with parents or relatives or in some cases where they continue in full time education or training with their foster carers. The corporate parenting responsibilities extend to this group of young people, in some cases if the young person is in higher education this can be up to the age of 24 years. Young people have a pathway plan which outlines the level of support they require to achieve independence and includes their accommodation, financial situation, employment education or training needs and their emotional well being.

8. LINKS TO CORPORATE ASSESSMENT

8.1 Children’s Social Care makes a significant contribution to the corporate assessment process within the Annual Performance Assessment and Corporate Performance Assessment.

8.2 The key performance indicators within this area are:

PI	<u>Current Performance</u>	<u>Comment</u>
A1 Stability of Placements of Children Looked After.	10.1	Very Good
A2 Educational qualifications of children looked after	62.5	Good
A3 Employment, Education and Training for Care Leavers		Awaiting Confirmation
B39 Children Looked After in Foster Placements or placed for adoption.	78.2	Awaiting Confirmation of Banding

B8	Cost of services for Looked After Children	-	To be confirmed
C81	Final warnings/reprimands and connections of Children Looked After	3.6	Deterioration on last year but in contact regionally and nationally, good.
C19	Health of Children Looked After	96.0	Very good
C23	Adoptions of Children Looked After	13.6	Very good
C24	Children Looked After absent from school	8.2	Good
C63	Participation in Looked After Reviews	100	Very Good
C68	Timeliness of Looked After Reviews	100	Not banded
C69	Distance children newly looked after are placed from home.	8.8	Not banded
D78	Long term stability of children looked after.	57.4	Not banded revised definition

9. HEALTH PARTNERS DUTY

- 9.1 The Primary Care Trust has a duty to provide a named nurse, the PCT also provides a named Paediatrician who undertakes the vast majority of initial health assessments for Looked After Children. The Paediatrician is also a member of the Child Placement Panel and medical advisor for fostering and adoption matters.
- 9.2 There are also links with the Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator who provides training for Children's Social Care staff.
- 9.3 The PCT also provides a dental service to target those children and young people who are difficult to engage.