

Central Bedfordshire  
Council  
Priory House  
Monks Walk  
Chicksands,  
Shefford SG17 5TQ



**please ask for** Leslie Manning  
**direct line** 0300 300 5132  
**date** 24 January 2013

## **NOTICE OF MEETING**

### **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**

Date & Time

**Monday, 4 February 2013 at 11.00 a.m.**

Venue at

**Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford**

Richard Carr  
**Chief Executive**

To: The Chairman and Members of the CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL:

#### **Elected Members (voting)**

Cllrs M A G Versallion (Chairman), A L Dodwell (Vice-Chairman),  
Mrs A Barker, N B Costin, Mrs S A Goodchild, Mrs D B Gurney, N J Sheppard  
and B Wells

[Named Substitutes:

Cllrs: P N Aldis, D Bowater, B J Spurr and A M Turner]

#### **Officers (voting)**

Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services  
Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

#### **Carers (non-voting)**

Only two of the four foster carers' co-opted representatives will be expected to attend at any one meeting.

## AGENDA

1. **Apologies**

To receive any apologies for absence and notification of substitute Members.

2. **Minutes**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 5 November 2012 (copy attached).

3. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

To receive any announcements from the Chairman and any matters of communication.

4. **Members' Interests**

To receive from Members any declarations of interest.

### Reports

Item	Subject	Page Nos.
5	<b>Outcomes of Ofsted Inspection of the Fostering Service - 11-14 December 2012</b>  To receive a presentation on the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection of the fostering service held in December 2012.	* 15 - 28
6	<b>Quarter Three Report on the Fostering Service - October to December 2012</b>  To consider a report outlining activity in the fostering service during Quarter Three, with a comparison to previous quarters.	* 29 - 36
7	<b>Adoption Improvement Grant</b>  To consider a report outlining the proposed options for spending the Council's Adoption Improvement Grant.	* 37 - 42

To consider the Children in Care Council Annual Report 2012/13 and work programme priorities for 2013/14 together with an accompanying presentation from the Children in Care Council.

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**CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 5 November 2012

**PRESENT**

**Elected Members (voting)**

Cllr M A G Versallion (Chairman), Mrs A Barker, D Bowater, MRS S A Goodchild, Mrs D B Gurney, N J Sheppard and B Wells

**Officers (voting)**

Mrs E Grant – Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services  
Mrs J Ogley – Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Apologies for Absence:    Cllr    N B Costin  
   Cllr    A L Dodwell  
   Mrs    H Philips

Members in Attendance:    Cllr    P N Aldis

Officers in Attendance:	Mrs E Grant	– Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services
	Ms F Mackirdy	– Head of Adoption and Fostering
	Mr L Manning	– Committee Services Officer
	Mrs J Ogley	– Director of Social Care, Health and Housing
	Ms S Scholey	– Interim Head of Service for Looked after Children, Leaving Care and Asylum

**CPP/12/17    Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 3 September 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**CPP/12/18    Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman referred to a letter from Edward Timpson MP, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, which had been sent to the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services. The letter, copies of which were circulated at the meeting, dealt with improving outcomes for care leavers and referred to measures introduced, or to be introduced, by the Government to this end. The letter also sought a commitment for local authorities to improve their performance where this fell short of best practice and support the newly published Charter for Care Leavers.

In response the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services explained that she intended to give full consideration to the issues raised within the letter. As a part of this process she would also undertake full consultation with the Children in Care Council and other Looked After Children. She would then report to the next meeting of the Panel with a proposed response. The meeting fully concurred with this approach.

For the Panel's benefit the Interim Head of Service for Looked After Children, Leaving Care and Asylum outlined various points of interest relating to care leavers in Central Bedfordshire. The meeting first noted that the current total number of former, relevant, care leavers stood at 101. All had been allocated personal advisors and all had pathway plans. The Interim Head of Service stated that she had recently audited a small sample of the pathway plans and notable improvements had been made in their quality. There had also been input from the young people.

The Interim Head of Service next advised that, from the data she had reviewed, there were only three young people, all Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), deemed not to be in suitable accommodation. This was because they were missing and so it was not actually possible to determine the status of their accommodation. Turning to N(ational) I(ndicator) 148 the meeting noted that the cohort was 23 young people of whom 14 were recorded as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). Individual details of placement groups were described.

The Interim Head of Service informed the meeting that the financial policy for care leavers was reviewed and revised in April 2012 and would be next reviewed in April 2013. The policy, which was composed in consultation with the Children in Care Council, was detailed and set out other, additional, payments which the Council might make to care leavers. The Interim Head of Service emphasised that young people were always given support by the Council in the spending of their setting up home allowance.

In response to a Member's query regarding the amount paid by the Council to enable care leavers to meet the costs of transition to independent living the Interim Head of Service stated that the care leaver's grant was £1,750. This sum was a base figure to pay for essentials and she stressed that additional payments were also made leading to a total payment of over £2,000 to each care leaver.

In response to a further query the Interim Head of Service stated that care leavers received priority treatment for social housing and received support when bidding for a property.

## CPP/12/19 **Members' Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

CPP/12/20     **The Future Development of the Corporate Parenting Panel**

Members received a presentation by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services on the role and remit of the Corporate Parenting Panel. The presentation set out the progress made by the Panel since Central Bedfordshire Council had begun on 1 April 2009 and the challenges which she felt the Panel faced. A diagram illustrating the relationship between the Panel and related bodies such as the Children in Care Council, Children's Trust and Executive was circulated at the meeting.

Working through her presentation the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services highlighted the question as to whether the Panel involved foster carers appropriately and expressed concern at the absence of any foster carer representation at the meeting. She queried whether this absence was the result of the Panel meetings becoming too formal. She also raised the wider question of what purpose the Panel served.

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services then raised a number of other issues for debate including whether there was a successful involvement of young people in the Panel and how a succession of senior officers in Children's Services each with their own views on how the Panel should work, had impacted on its success. She also referred to the lack of recognition of the role of officers in general as corporate parents, a position emphasised by the absence of training provision for officers on this role. The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services stressed the importance of the 'Whole Council' approach in which officers from across the Council, not restricted by statutory regulation, could contribute towards improving outcomes for Looked After Children. Likewise, the Council's committees could consider the impact of their decisions on Looked After Children and take action which would support them as a 'Whole Life' approach.

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services referred to the testing of the Council's practice against those of other local authorities.

In response to the above full and frank discussion took place amongst the Panel and a number of observations, views and suggestions were made as follows:

- a) Meetings – the Panel's meetings were felt to be too formal and too much like committee meetings. These were contrasted with Corporate Parenting meetings held at the former Bedfordshire County Council where meetings were informal and attendees would sit in a circle, eating together;
- b) Time of meetings – Panel meetings were usually held at 11.00 a.m. when Looked After Children were at school or college and so were unable to attend. Further, today's meeting had been held on a teacher training day thus preventing foster carers from attending. Future meetings should not be held on teacher training days or school holidays. Some evening meetings, starting at 5.00 or 6.00 p.m., should be considered and a buffet tea provided;

- c) Agenda items – foster carers and Looked After Children had no opportunity to raise items at Panel meetings. They should have ‘slots’ set aside on Panel agendas where they could raise items for consideration;
- d) Representation – foster carers and Looked After Children should be encouraged to attend the Panel’s meetings. The Looked After Children attending should be varied so that a range of views was presented to reflect ages and other factors. Membership could include a young adult who was a former Looked After Child and who could bring his or her personal experience of the system to meetings;
- e) Corporate parenting role – some councillors were not aware of how important their role as corporate parents was and staff in general did not know of their role as corporate parents. Members in general should attend at least one Panel meeting a year and information for staff on their responsibilities could be included in their induction packs. Reference was made to the advocacy role undertaken by Members at the legacy authority which enabled a closer relationship to be established with Looked After Children ;
- f) Knowledge and training – during the Ofsted inspection Members felt they had insufficient training and background knowledge on the service. It was felt that members should be able to observe the officers undertaking service delivery.
- g) Comparison with other Panels – Members should visit other local authorities to observe their Corporate Parenting Panels in operation and invite representatives from those Panels to observe and comment on Central Bedfordshire’s Panel.

In conclusion the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children’s Services advised the meeting that Ofsted had no set organisational template on which Corporate Parenting Panels should be based. Instead Ofsted placed emphasis on a Panel’s positive impact and enthusiasm. She stressed that the Panel should focus on its core purpose and drive outcomes.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1      that a working group composed of Councillors Mrs A Barker, D Bowater, A L Dodwell (subject to confirmation), Mrs S A Goodchild, M A G Versallion and B Wells be formed to consider best practice having regard to Corporate Parenting meetings conducted elsewhere;**
- 2      that the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children’s Services identify those officers willing to assist the working group identified in resolution 1 above;**
- 3      that, for the sake of speed and efficiency, working group’s business be conducted by email rather than formal meeting;**



- 4 that the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services organise a trip for the working group to visit other local authorities with regard to their Corporate Parenting meetings;
- 5 that the trip referred to in resolution 3 above take place before Christmas 2012 if possible and certainly prior to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel on 4 February 2013 so that any findings can be incorporated into any associated report;
- 6 that a draft development plan be prepared by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services for submission to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel on 4 February 2013;
- 7 that the Committee Services Officer write to the foster carer representatives on the Corporate Parenting Panel to apologise for the November meeting of the Panel being held on a teacher training day when foster carers would not be available to attend;
- 8 that the Committee Services Officer confirm that the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel is not scheduled to be held during a school holiday or teacher training day;
- 9 that the Committee Services Officer ensure that the meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel to be held in the next municipal year are not scheduled to be held during a school holiday or teacher training day;

**CPP/12/21 National Agenda - "Stolen Children"**

The Head of Adoption and Fostering informed the Panel that the Council had been notified by the British Association for Adoption & Fostering of a website called 'Stolen Children of the UK'. The Head of Adoption and Fostering advised Members of the website's content and of the organisation's policy of publishing information on individual local authority social services officers.

**NOTED**

**the oral report on the website 'Stolen Children of the UK'.**

**CPP/12/22 Recruitment of Foster Carers**

Members received a presentation by the Head of Adoption and Fostering on foster carer recruitment. The presentation set out the recruitment activity undertaken, including advertisements, events, stalls, editorials and the use of social media, the number of enquiries received and the level of successful 'conversion' of these enquiries into new foster carer appointees, the comments made by existing foster carers about their experience of fostering for the Council and, lastly, the level of allowances paid to carers.

In response to a Member's query regarding the timescale for the period between the initial enquiry by a member of the public and their approval as a new foster carer the Head of Adoption and Fostering explained that the target was 20 weeks from the time of their formal application through to approval. She stated that if this timescale was missed it was usually as a result of delays for statutory checks or personal reasons.

A Member sought clarification on the need for both the Council's Fostering Service and independent, private fostering agencies to operate. In response the Head of Adoption and Fostering explained that fostering took place in a 'mixed economy' and that the private sector was able, for example, to provide niche placements for more difficult to place children; a service which would not be cost effective for the Council to do. She also stated that a decision to be a foster carer was not simply based on the level of allowances paid by the Council or agency. Some foster carers chose, for moral reasons, to foster for the Council rather than the private sector and, further, appreciated the support offered by the Fostering Service in the form of practical advice and support groups. In response to a query the Head of Adoption and Fostering added that new foster carers were 'buddied' with experienced carers. Experienced carers, if undergoing a difficult period in their work, could in turn be 'buddied' with other experienced carers for support.

With regard to placements the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services explained that the earlier a child was taken into care the greater the chance of placing them. She added that the age of children being taken into care was drifting downward as a reflection of cultural change. In response to a Member's question as to whether there were sufficient and suitable foster carers for the range of children entering care the Head of Adoption and Fostering confirmed that there were. She added that the difficulties which arose in placing some children reflected problems experienced nationally and it was recognised that certain groups would require specialist provision.

A number of questions and suggestions followed regarding foster carer recruitment. During this point a Member queried whether otherwise suitable applicants to become foster carers were rejected because they failed to meet the relevant criteria in full, perhaps because they were smokers, and asked whether the criteria could be too strict. In response the Head of Adoption and Fostering explained that the only persons automatically excluded from becoming foster carers were those prevented from doing so by law. In the case, for example, of smokers, they could be recruited as foster carers but would be expected to smoke outside their home. Further, children aged under five years would not be placed with them due to the close contact that would be expected to occur between the foster carer and child, and nor would children with respiratory difficulties. The Head of Adoption and Fostering stressed that all applicants would be assessed on an individual basis.

Members suggested additional recruitment activities for consideration. Reference was also made to the Council's current policy of paying a £100 bonus to an existing foster carer for nominating an applicant who was, in turn, approved as a foster carer. Given the low number of carers appointed by this method it was felt that this policy should be examined to see if any

improvements could be introduced. The Head of Adoption and Fostering undertook to consult with foster carers to establish their views on this matter.

**NOTED**

**the presentation on foster carer recruitment.**

**CPP/12/23      Quarter Two Report on the Fostering Service - July to September 2012**

The Panel considered a report by the Interim Assistant Director Children's Services Operations which outlined activity in the Fostering Service during Quarter Two (July to September 2012) with comparison to previous quarters.

The Panel received updates on the following areas:

- Recruitment of foster carers
- Placements for children
- Training for foster carers
- Key events
- Key issues

With regard to the recruitment of foster carers, and in response to a Member's comments regarding the accessibility of cumulative data within the officer's report, the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services stated that, in future this data would be included as part of the relevant text of the report as well as in graphical form within an appendix to the report as it was currently provided.

**NOTED**

**the content of the Quarter Two report on the Fostering Service for the period July to September 2012.**

**CPP/12/24      Half-Year Report on the Adoption Service - April to September 2012**

The Panel considered a report by the Interim Assistant Director Children's Services Operations on activity in the Adoption Service during the first six months of 2012-13. The report updated Members on developments in the following areas:

- Recruitment of adopters
- Adoption planning and placements for children
- Special guardianship and adoption support
- Adult adoption work
- Key events
- Key issues

Under 'key issues' the Panel noted that the Department for Education had launched three consultations in relation to adoption practice. The consultations

with regard to a) contact for children where adoption was the plan and b) sibling placements had now closed. The third consultation was ongoing and sought views on a major change in the way adopters were recruited. This included a reduction in the recruitment period and the implementation of 'Fostering for Adoption', a practice where children were first placed with adopters under a fostering arrangement whilst the court decided on whether adoption should be the plan. In response the Head of Adoption and Fostering stated that, whilst the Council could reduce the element of time it required in the recruitment period, delays could also arise when the court undertook its duties and this problem would remain unresolved. She added that the Government wanted to see the total recruitment period reduced from the current eight months to no more than six, of which the Council should take no more than four months. The Head of Adoption and Fostering stated that the outstanding consultation was due to end in December and the outcome would be known early next year.

In response to a query by the Chairman the Head of Adoption and Fostering stated that, whilst other adoption bodies welcomed the Government's sentiments, it was felt that some core problems within the adoption recruitment process would remain.

In response to a query by a Member on whether the role of the Adoption Panel would change the Head of Adoption and Fostering explained that the composition of Adoption Panels was being considered but their function was likely to remain.

## **NOTED**

**the content of the half-year report on the Adoption Service for the period April to September 2012.**

CPP/12/25

### **Looked After Children's Health Progress Report**

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Nursing and Quality which set out the progress made in improving health outcomes for Looked After Children following the Ofsted inspection of Services for Safeguarding and Looked After Children in February and March 2012. The report, which had originally been submitted to the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board, set out both the action taken to deal with the issues which Ofsted had required to be dealt with in the six months following its inspection and, in addition, longer term improvement planning.

In the absence of a representative from the Health Services the report was presented by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services.

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services drew Members' attention to the transfer of responsibility for the delivery of the action plan from NHS Bedfordshire and Luton to the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group. She then referred to some areas where progress had been made but the status of outcomes remained as 'red'. The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services explained that this was the result of the 'milestones'

used being unable to recognise partial improvements in service provision, thus preventing the outcome status from being upgraded to 'amber'.

**NOTED**

**the Looked After Children's health progress report.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 11.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.54 p.m.)

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# **Outcomes of Ofsted Inspection of the Fostering Service**

**11<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> December 2012**

# Context and Background

- Under the current Ofsted inspection framework, fostering services are inspected once in every 3 year cycle
- This was the first inspection since the Unitary Council came into being
- Fostering is part of the shared service managed by Central Bedfordshire Council on behalf of Bedford Borough Council
- Ten working days notice was given, and the inspection took place from 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> December 2012



# Methodology and Framework

- As a shared service, the inspectors were considering, in tandem, outcomes for fostered young people from Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council
- Two inspectors were on site and
  - § looked at records
  - § met with children, foster carers, staff and other agencies
  - § considered feedback from surveys sent out in April 2012
  - § analysed performance data and our self assessment submitted in May 2012
- They formed a judgement about 'Overall Effectiveness' based on four sub-judgements:
  - Outcomes for children
  - Quality of service
  - Safeguarding
  - Leadership and Management

# Outcomes

- The Overall Effectiveness of the service was judged to be Good
- In the sub-judgements of 'Outcomes for Children' and 'Safeguarding' we were also judged to be Good.
- In 'Quality of Service' and 'Leadership and Management' we were judged to be Adequate
- The report contained eight recommendations and the service has a detailed operational action plan with timescales to address these.

# Recommendations

**Ofsted said:** ‘ensure that foster carers have an awareness of the role and contact details of the office of the Children’s Rights Director in order to enable them to support young people to make appropriate use of this service.’

**We will:** write to all foster carers about the Children’s Right’s Director, include details in our next newsletter to foster carers and update the Children’s Guide to include this information.

# Recommendations

**Ofsted said:** 'ensure that foster carers are given the maximum appropriate flexibility to take decisions relating to children in their care, within the framework of the agreed placement plan.'

**We will:** ensure that whenever a child is placed there is clear agreement about what decisions have been delegated to foster carers. We will provide some advice and training for children's social workers about expectations and how to implement this in practice. For children already placed we will ask Independent Reviewing Officers to discuss this at the next review of the child's care. We will ask Independent Reviewing Officers to keep this issue under constant review.

# Recommendations

**Ofsted said:** 'ensure that all foster carers complete the required Children's Workforce Development Council training support and development standards within stated timescales.'

**We will:** continue with our programme of training, workshops, individual support and financial rewards to encourage and support foster carers to complete the standards within timescale.

# Recommendations

**Ofsted said:** ‘ensure that, when placements are made, foster carers are provided with all the information about the child and their family that they need to carry out their role effectively. The information must be in a clear, comprehensive written form.’

**We will:** visit children's social work teams to remind them of their duty to provide this information. We will also maintain records about when information has been provided, and the managers will escalate concerns to the appropriate children's social work team manager if information is outstanding or not of sufficient quality.

# Recommendations

**Ofsted said:** ‘ensure that supervision provided to foster carers follows a clearly stated agenda, which ensures that the carer is meeting each child’s needs, taking account of their wishes and feeling, as well as providing a framework for assessing the carers’ performance and developing their competence and skills.’

**We will:** monitor supervision records of foster carers to ensure that in all cases, on all occasions, supervising social workers address all items on the proforma agenda for foster carers’ supervision.

# Recommendations

**Ofsted said:** ‘demonstrate, through clear recording practice, that all potential allegations are referred to the local area designated officer (LADO) and retain a clear record of the decision making process with regard to categorising incidents as allegations or concerns. All records relating to allegations, complaints and concerns must contain clear detail of actions taken and outcomes.’

**We will:** make sure that our records of complaints and allegations are complete and detailed, and include the record of the decision making in conjunction with the LADO.



# Recommendations

**Ofsted said:** ‘ensure that monitoring reports identify the action taken to address any issues raised and reflect the identification of any patterns and trends emerging and their implications for service development.’

**We will:** update monitoring reports from now on with actions taken to address issues. We will also collate quarterly analysis of any trends and action taken to address them.

# Recommendations

**Ofsted said:** 'ensure that the Statement of Purpose reflects the services and facilities provided to family and friends carers.'

**We will:** update the Statement of Purpose with this information by the end of January 2013.

# **New arrangements from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013**

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 there will no longer be three separate inspections of adoption services, fostering services and the services for looked after children.

There will be one, unannounced, ten day inspection of services for looked after children which will consider the placements and support given to them, and the planning for their permanency, including adoption if appropriate.

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**Meeting:** Corporate Parenting Panel  
**Date:** 4 February 2012  
**Subject:** Quarter Three Report on the Fostering Service – October to December 2012  
**Report of:** Sue Tyler, Acting Assistant Director Children's Services Operations  
**Summary:** The report outlines the activity in the fostering service during Quarter Three, with comparison to previous quarters.

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**Contact Officer:** Fiona Mackirdy, Head of Adoption and Fostering  
**Public/Exempt:** Public  
**Wards Affected:** All  
**Function of:** Council

## CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

### Council Priorities:

Central Bedfordshire Council's Medium Term Plan Priority C Promote Health and Well-being.

The Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014 Priority 2 – Protecting children and keeping them safe.

Fostering is a key statutory service to Looked After Children.

### Financial:

1. Adoption and Fostering within Children's Services has an annual budget of £5.015 million, including income from Bedford Borough Council under the Shared Service arrangement. There are no new financial considerations arising from the Annual Reports.

### Legal:

2. Regulations, associated Statutory Guidance and National Minimum Standards outlines the requirement to report to Members on the management and outcomes of the services, in order that they can satisfy themselves that the services are effective and achieving good outcomes for children.

### Risk Management:

3. Regulatory Risks: Failure to report to Members would be a breach of National Minimum Standard.

### Staffing (including Trades Unions):

4. Not Applicable.

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

5. Fostering and services provided to Looked after Children affects all sectors of communities.

**Community Safety:**

6. Not Applicable.

**Sustainability:**

7. Not Applicable.

**Procurement:**

8. Not Applicable.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**that the Corporate Parenting Panel note and comment on the content of the report.**

**Background**

9. The Children Act 2004, Care Standards Act 2000 and associated Relevant Regulations and National Minimum Standards require Local Authority Fostering Services to report to Members at three monthly intervals. This will be achieved by presentation of quarterly updates to the Corporate Parenting Panel and a full year Annual Report to this Panel and the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June each year.
10. The Adoption and Fostering service is a shared service hosted by Central Bedfordshire Council. Annual reports contain information activity in respect of both Councils. This report will be provided to Bedford Borough.
11. This report covers activity in the period October to December 2012. Comparative data with previous quarters is summarised in the tables in Appendix A.

**Recruitment of Foster carers**

12. During the period 43 enquiries were received from members of the public interested in becoming foster carers. This is similar to the comparable quarter for last year. Traditionally fewer enquiries are received in the autumn/winter months. For the year so far numbers of enquiries are on par with last year.
13. 24 assessments of new foster carers commenced, of which 18 were assessments of households caring for a child within their own family. This is a similar level of activity as the last two quarters with the number of new assessments started for mainstream carers being 8 on average per quarter.

14. 14 new fostering households were approved by the Fostering and Permanence panels. Taken with changes to carers' approval and resignations, there was a net increase of 9 fostering placements in Quarter 2, taking the total for the year so far to 35.

### **Placements for Children**

15. In these 3 months there were 102 requests for new or change of fostering placements. This is a similar level to the previous quarter.
16. 17 newly looked after children were placed with in-house foster carers of whom 10 were Central Bedfordshire children. 15 CBC children were placed in Independent Fostering Agency provision when becoming looked after.
17. At 30 December 2012, there were a total of 164 children living with in-house foster carers of which 85 were Central Bedfordshire children. This number has remained relatively consistent for the last three quarters.
18. The absolute number of looked after children from Central Bedfordshire living in Independent Fostering Agency provision was 87 at 31 December 2012, an increase of 3 since the last quarter and reflective of the continued increase in the number of looked after children over the period.

### **Training for Foster Carers**

19. 19 training courses took place involving 192 delegates. This included preparation training for prospective foster carers as well as short courses and workshops for approved foster carers.

### **Key Events**

20. Specific and general fostering recruitment campaigns took place in this period. Specific adverts for carers for younger children and babies were placed in local press and some parish magazines. Separate adverts and press releases were made to coincide with 'Sons and Daughters' week which celebrates the contribution the children of foster carers make. Our joint first aid course and drama activities for sons and daughters and looked after children which took place in October half-term received a national write up in the Fostering Network's magazine for foster carers and professionals. This event was very well received by the young people and they have asked for more similar opportunities.
21. A planned lunch for foster carers to promote the work of the Foster Care Forum and the local Foster Care Association with the aim of seeking new recruits to both these bodies, and the Corporate Parenting Panel had to be cancelled due to very poor response from foster carers. We intend to schedule an evening event with light snacks/drinks to see if this is more convenient for carers to attend.

**Ofsted Inspection**

22. Inspection of the Fostering Service by Ofsted took place from 14 to 18 December. The service was judged to be good overall. More detailed feedback about the inspection outcomes is the subject of a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which is also to be presented to this Panel.

**Appendices:**

Appendix A – Comparative Data

**Background Papers:**

None



## Appendix A

Chart one shows the allocation of in house placements to Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and Bedford Borough Council (BBC) during the last four quarters.

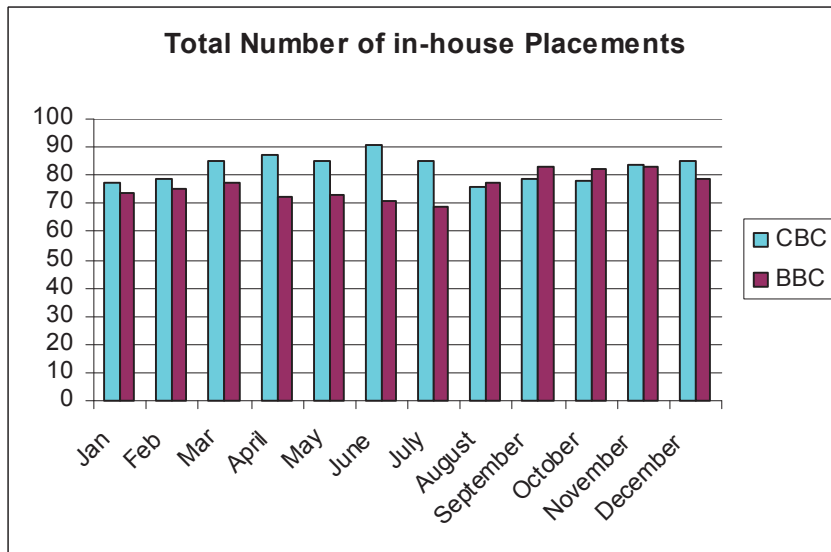


Chart two shows the proportion of new placements made in CBC and BBC in the last four quarters.

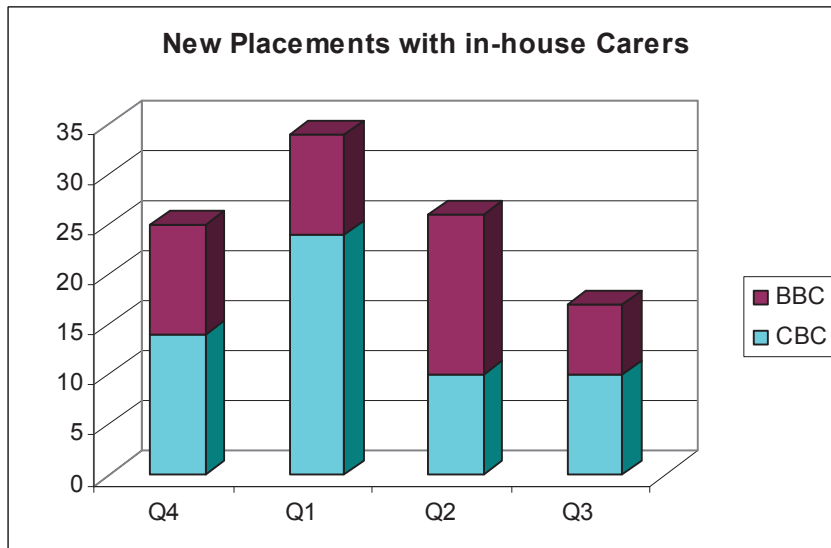


Chart three shows the number of foster carer assessments started in the last four quarters.



Chart four shows the total number of requests of both councils for new placements and a change of placement in the last four quarters.

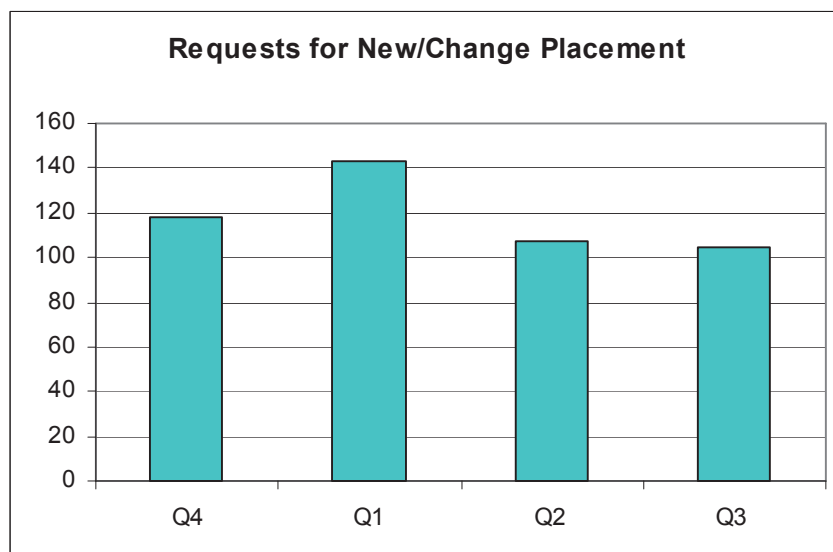


Chart five shows the total number of enquiries made about fostering in the last four quarters.

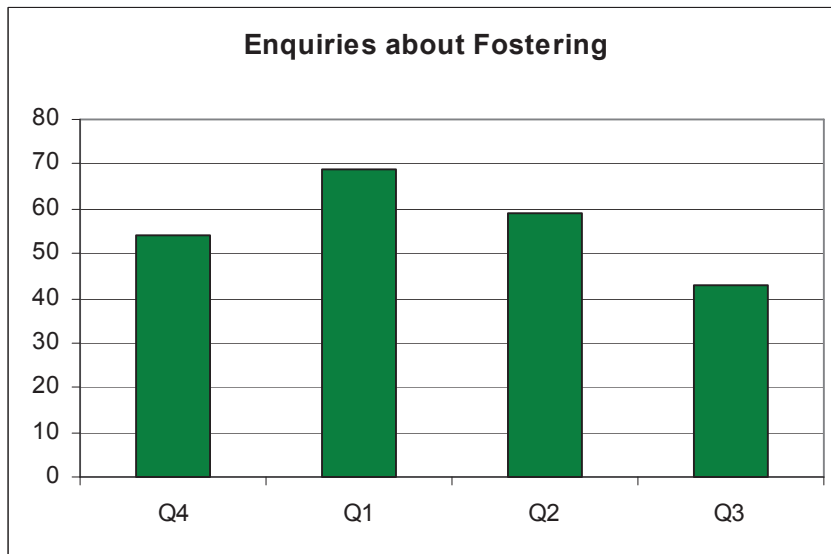
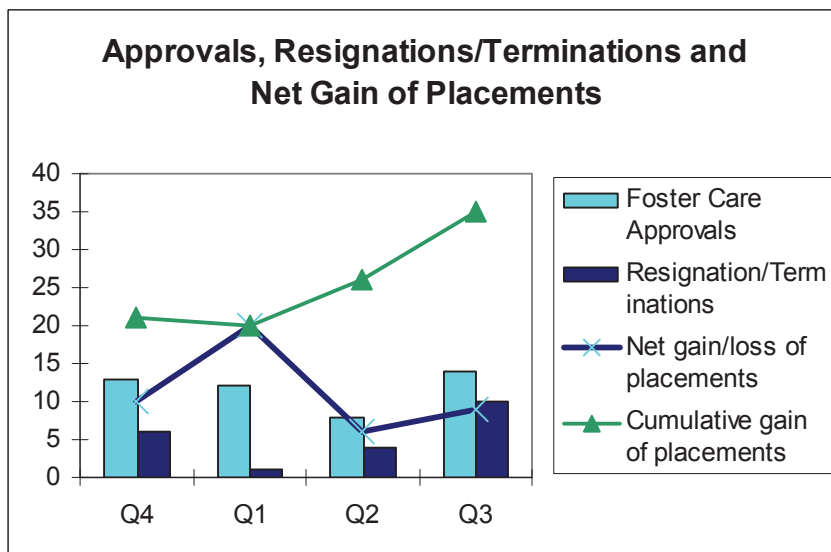


Chart six shows the total numbers of approvals, resignations/terminations and net gain of placements in the last four quarters.



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**Meeting:** Corporate Parenting Panel  
**Date:** 4 February 2013  
**Subject:** Adoption Improvement Grant  
**Report of:** Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services  
**Summary:** This report outlines the proposed options for the spend of the Adoption Improvement Grant

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Contact Officer: Fiona Mackirdy, Head of Adoption and Fostering  
Public/Exempt: Public  
Wards Affected: All  
Function of: Council

#### **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

**Council Priorities:**

Central Bedfordshire Council's Medium Term Plan Priority C Promote Health and Well-being.

The Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014 Priority 2 – Protecting children and keeping them safe.

Adoption is a key statutory service to Looked After Children.

**Financial:**

1. There are no further financial implications other than those detailed in the main body of the report.

**Legal:**

2. There are no legal implications if compliance with the grant conditions is met.

**Risk Management:**

3. There are no significant risks as current practice in the service is considered to be good and there is positive feedback from customers and stakeholders.

**Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

4. No staffing implications.

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

5. A key part of the national reform includes numbers and timeliness of adoption for children from Black, Minority, Ethnic (BME) backgrounds. With this in mind, practice has to demonstrate that proper account is taken of the needs of children in relation to their heritage and identity.
6. The Council successfully recruits carers who are gay or lesbian, and those from a range of ethnic backgrounds. It is anticipated that the national reform programme will address the issues these adopters face in being matched with a child in a timely way. This has not yet proved to be an issue for this service.

**Community Safety:**

7. Not Applicable.

**Sustainability:**

8. There are no sustainability implications.

**Procurement:**

9. Not Applicable.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**that the Corporate Parenting Panel comment on the content of the report.**

**Background**

10. The Department for Education published 'An Action Plan for Adoption; Tackling Delay' in March 2012 as a blueprint for Government intentions to accelerate the adoption process so that more children benefit from adoption and more rapidly.
11. Changes to adoption law and practice through publication of new regulations and Statutory guidance were been made during Summer 2012; these affected the practice of the Adoption Panel and Agency Decision Making function. Further amendments were proposed as detailed in the consultation which finished on 5 December 2012. These included radical changes to the recruitment process for adopters, implementation of 'fostering for adoption' and changes to the constitution of adoption panels.
12. On 4 October 2012 each Council, acting in its role as the local authority, was advised of the allocation of an Adoption Improvement Grant to assist with implementation of the reforms. Grants have to be allocated within the 2012-13 financial year with clear reporting deadlines to the Department for Education (DfE) of 18 January and 15 April 2013.
13. Central Bedfordshire Council allocation is £37,010. As a shared service with Bedford Borough Council, the Adoption Service is with Bedford Borough Council, also calling on some of their allocation of £34,786.

## **An Action Plan for Adoption**

14. An 'Action Plan for Adoption' outlines several key proposals to speed up adoption:
  - i. Provide a framework to support swift decision making and which avoids duplication with court scrutiny and decisions – changes to role of adoption panels
  - ii. Tackling delay in matching children to adopters and specifically in finding families for black children and increasing use of the National Adoption Register.
  - iii. Considering 'fostering for adoption' – placing children as early as possible with carers likely to become their adoptive parents.
  - iv. Changing adopter recruitment and assessment – six month process in two parts, new national 'front-door', improvements in adoption support – national 'passport' and national consistency.
  - v. New adoption scorecard including new indicators, and incrementally increasing performance thresholds. Improvement notices and ultimately intervention where performance remains poor.

## **Context for Central Bedfordshire Council**

15. The latest Adoption Scorecard was published on 30 November 2012. Performance in Central Bedfordshire Council in terms of timeliness is within Government targets. The number of children being adopted is below statistical neighbours and national averages.
16. The Adoption tracking system implemented in September 2012 has identified approximately 40 children who have a plan or who are likely to have a plan for adoption. Within this group of children there are a small cohort for whom it may be difficult to find adoptive parents, due to their age, their needs by virtue of being part of a sibling group
17. As a result of increases in numbers of looked after children, more proactive planning for children and changes in regulations, there are pressures on the capacity of the Agency Decision Maker, Adoption Panel Adviser and Medical Advisor. These pressures increase the risk of delays in cases being considered and decisions being made.

## **Proposals for the use of the Central Bedfordshire Council Grant**

18. The first proposal is to pilot a specialist Family Finding Project concentrating on good quality publicity and follow up for children difficult to place. If successful, consideration would be given as to whether this could be funded by future grant allocations or core funding. This would consist of a Senior Social Work Assistant post to focus on ensuring material sent to the Consortium and other local authorities is of high quality, including photographs and DVDs and that there is prompt follow up of enquiries. The cost of this is estimated at £10,360 for a 3 month agency filled post plus £2,000 for materials and printing.

19. The second proposal is a short time-limited project to consider the feasibility of implementing a fostering for adoption model. This would consider the number of children that could be suitable for such placements based on the previous case data and those children we know are looked after with a likely plan for adoption.
20. The second part of the study would be the changes to recruitment, training, assessment and support needed to recruit adopters to such a project. The project would consist of:
  - 2 days work researching outcomes and factors for success of similar concurrent planning projects by other adoption agencies
  - 2 days identifying possible cohort of children
  - 6 days looking at changes to adopter recruitment
  - 2 days report writing
21. The cost to the Council would be 12 days at £280 per day, totalling £3,360. One further day would be needed if Bedford Borough Council children were also to be considered. The project would report mid February and if proposals were taken forward then further project time to amend training and recruitment materials could be commissioned.
22. The third suggestion is a short term increase in capacity for the panel Medical Advisor. A source of delay in adoption planning is the adoption medical; there are issues in securing appointments for medicals to take place and then the Medical Advisor has to consider the information and advise the Agency Decision Maker. At present demand for medical advice is exceeding the time afforded by the three sessions per week which is contracted. The proposal is for January to March to secure additional session of Panel Advisor time per week. This is subject to final confirmation from Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and is estimated at £4,000. Further discussion is needed with the CCG to ensure that Medical Advisor capacity is sufficient to meet demand.
23. A further risk of delay at present is Adoption Panel Advisor capacity – all plans for children and assessments of adopters have to be quality assured. It is suggested that short term capacity is increased through recruitment of a locum adoption advisor for 3 months to quality assure plans and provide more proactive advice to Agency Decision Makers and to teams. The cost would be 3 months salary at £40 per hour, total cost £14,000.
24. The local adoption consortium, comprising 5 councils and a Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA) have suggested that an administrator be appointed to organise consortium events whereby children and adopters' profiles are shared to maximise opportunities for cross-authority local working. The suggested contribution is £3,000.
25. The total of the five proposals is £36,720.

## **Outcomes**

26. The Adoption and Fostering Service will build on current good practice in relation to individual cases and performance overall.



### **Governance and Consultation**

27. There are clear rules governing the allocation and spend of the grant. Payment will be made in full in February 2013 following the submission of a statement of how the funding is intended to be used no later than 18 January 2013. Failure to submit evidence by this date will result in a delay in payment.
28. Further evidence will need to be submitted by 15 April 2013 to confirm how the funding has been used. Failure to do so will result in the return of all or part of the Adoption Improvement Grant

### **Conclusions and Next Steps**

29. The work to spend this Grant is on going.

### **Appendices:**

None

### **Background Papers:**

None

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**Meeting:** Corporate Parenting Panel

**Date:** 4 February 2013

**Subject:** Children in Care Council Annual Report for 2012/13

**Report of:** Cllr Mark Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services.

**Summary:** Attached at Appendix A and Appendix B are the Children in Care Council Annual Report for 2012/13 and the Looked After Children and Young People's Participation Work Programme 2011/12. The Committee is asked to comment on the reports. A presentation by the Children in Care Council is attached at Appendix C.

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**Contact Officer:** Sue Tyler, Acting Assistant Director Children's Services Operations

**Public/Exempt:** Public

**Wards Affected:** All

**Function of:** Council

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

The reports support Priority 2 of the Central Bedfordshire's Strategic Plan 2009-11: Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people. The reports also support priority 2 of the Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014: Protecting children and keeping them safe.

### **Financial:**

1. There are no financial implications for the Council.

### **Legal:**

2. There are no legal implications for the Council.

### **Risk Management:**

3. Regulatory Risks: Failure to report to Members would be a breach of National Guidance.

### **Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

4. Not Applicable.

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

5. There are no implications for the Council.

**Community Safety:**

6. Not Applicable.

**Sustainability:**

7. Not Applicable.

**Procurement:**

8. Not Applicable.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**that the Corporate Parenting Panel comment on the content of the attached reports.**

**Appendices:**

Appendix A - Children in Care Council Annual Report 2012/13

Appendix B - Children in Care Council Work Programme Priorities for 2013 – 2014

Appendix C – Children in Care Council - Presentation

**Background Papers:**

None

## **Children in Care Council (CiCC) & Participation** **Annual Report 2012-2013**

### **Current Numbers of Looked After Children**

The following information has been taken from the current list of looked after children, participation activities and meeting are open to all looked after children above the age of 8. Where possible young people who are placed out of county but near enough to travel to meetings / activities are encouraged to do so. There will be a specific group to gain the views of unaccompanied asylum seeking young people.

<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Total YP</b>	<b>Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers</b>	<b>YP placed in area, able to travel to meetings / activities</b>	<b>YP engaged in CiCC / Activities</b>
16yr - 18yr	44	9	20	10
13yr - 15yr	47	1	34	18
8yr - 12yr	35	0	26	16
<b>Care Leavers</b>				
18yr - 21yr	98	39		15
Over 21				2

### **Children in Care Council Meetings**

During the last year the number of young people showing an interest in being a part of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) has increased, this has lead to the development of different CiCC meetings for specific age groups. The groups are for 8 – 12 year olds, 13 – 15 year olds, 16 -18 year olds and the 18 – 25 year old group. There are currently around 22 young people engaged with the CiCC meetings, with another 10 young people who have shown interest in attending the meetings.

The meetings for the older age groups take place monthly and focus on the priorities set out in the CiCC work plan for 2012-2013. The younger groups meet during the school holidays and focus on consultation activities. Peer mentors attend the younger CiCC meetings and offer support to the young people. The peer mentors are then able to represent the views of the younger children in care at the monthly CiCC meetings.

One of the new members of the CiCC stated:

*'What I want to get out of being a part of the CiCC: Build confidence, make new friends, learn more about what it was/is like being in care to other people, and most of all MAKE A DIFFERENCE... I want to be able to help young people, by using my own experience to show them that it was/ isn't so bad and things always get better, I want to be able to try and improve the way some things are done, so young people in care have a better chance to be happy, even in care.'*

Peer mentors continue to support on activity based participation and consultation groups, including the recent Fostering Ofsted inspection and promote the work of the CiCC, acting as a positive role model and supporting young people during group discussions.

#### **Links to Corporate Parenting Panel**

Members of the CiCC continue to attend Corporate Parenting Panel three times per year as agreed in the CiCC Priorities. Members of the CiCC present updates on their work plan and during one of the meetings organise an activity with members of the Corporate Parenting Panel. Due the times and dates the meetings take place there are only a small number of young people who can attend due to other commitments.

Members of the CiCC will be meeting with Richard Carr and Edwina Grant in February 2013 and will present information on the work of the CiCC over the last year. During the fostering inspection a member of the CiCC spoke highly about the meetings with Richard and Edwina informing the inspector of the value of these and told the inspector that their wishes and feelings are listened to.

Members of the CiCC met regularly with the previous Assistant Director and developed a good working relationship with her. These meetings will be arranged with the new Assistant Director as well as the Head of Service for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

#### **Consultation Events**

Members of the CiCC have attended a number of regional and national CiCC events where they have represented the views of Central Bedfordshire's looked after children and care leavers. The regional meetings are organised by 'A National Voice' and take place three times per year. At one of the meetings Tim Loughton attended the meeting and heard positive feedback from Central Bedfordshire's CiCC members.

Members have also attended a regional Corporate Parenting Panel event to give their views on welfare reform and raising the participation age.

Members of the CiCC also attended a national event in London where young people from different CiCCs met together to share examples of good practice. The CiCC members left the event with ideas of how to improve Central Bedfordshire's CiCC.

Surveys were completed for the Ofsted Inspection during the half term events and completed surveys were then sent direct to the Children's Rights Team. Members of the CiCC met with the Ofsted inspector and talked positively about the work of the CiCC and showed him one of the DVDs which are promoted the LAC pack.

A group of younger looked after children met with an Ofsted inspector during Fostering's Ofsted inspection along with a CiCC member; they talked about what was good about their foster home and created 'houses' to represent this.

The inspectors gave the young people good feedback and were pleased with the houses that they had created.

The Conference and Review Service developed a survey to look at the experience of children and young people at their Looked After Review Meeting. A number of young people were identified by the service and the surveys were conducted by the Participation Officer and Support Worker. The results of the survey were shared with the Head of Service for the Conference and Review Service.

The consultation documents for looked after children's reviews are being updated and members of the CiCC have given their views on how the questions should be worded and on the design of the documents.

Young people who attended the awards evening completed a survey which focused on contact with social workers and the social work teams as well as how young people would like to give their views and if they would like to join the CiCC.

### **Annual Awards Evening**

There were over 180 nominations for the awards evening which took place on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> October. The event was attended by over 200 people with 100 children and young people expected to receive their award on the night. Councillor Mark Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services presented the awards; CiCC members opened the evening and presented their DVD which showed the work of the CiCC over the last year. All young people who were nominated received a voucher and a certificate.

The Council Chambers were decorated to promote the work of the CiCC, there was also a space for children and young people to write and display what they were most proud of on the Achievement wall.

Some of the comments on the forms included –

*'Being awarded and voted by my peers cadet of the year at air cadets'*

*'I learnt to swim, made a new friend, I achieved up to 333 merits, how to make a flower with a compass, learnt to say hello in Spanish, Japanese, French, Thai, German, Chinese. I am the class representative.'*

A newly recruited member of the CiCC performed at the awards evening and entertainment was also provided by a 'close up' magician, stilt walker, DJ, a paper plane contest organised by a social worker from the Look After Children's Team and young people were also able to take part in a circus skills workshop.

Feedback from the awards has been very positive from young people and professionals.

*'My young person was very emotional and humbled about being nominated for an award and his feedback was that he was going to treasure his award forever as it was the nicest thing that had ever happened to him in his whole life. He was so so pleased and will look back on that evening for a long time to come with a huge amount of pride.'* Personal Adviser from Leaving Care Team.

*'A huge thank you for organising this fantastic event. It was obvious that everyone had a great evening. I was particularly impressed that there were so many very small children receiving awards - and walking up confidently to receive them - as well as older young people, some of whom had succeeded in getting jobs or were progressing well towards independence.'* Yolanda Corden, Interim Assistant Director.

### **Website**

Work is being done with regards to the dedicated web site.

### **Activity Based Participation and Summer Activities Programme**

There has been a number of activity days organised during the school holidays, the British Horse Society organised three pony days where young people had the opportunity to learn and care for the ponies and then have time learning the basis of riding. There have also been opportunities for young people to attend ice skating and a cinema trip.

During the summer holidays there were six days of activities during the summer holidays which included a trip to see Shrek at the theatre, trips to Gulliver's, Ice Skating and an outdoor activities day. There were around 35 young people who attended at least one activity day and members of the CiCC also came along to support the young children and act as peer mentors.

*One young person said 'I've never been able to the theatre before and attending activities like these means I can get out of the house and meet with other young people who are in care.'*

*A foster carer said 'A very big thank you to you and your team and the young people that worked so hard to put these special days out for looked after children. I feel that younger children really benefit from them and it also lets them see that even older children can not always live at home and that they are ok and happy.'*

The University of Bedfordshire organised a day for looked after children between the ages of 7 and 13. The day was aimed at raising aspirations of young people going onto further and higher education. Young people who attended learnt about university life and toured the campus. Young people enjoyed the day with one young person attending a PEP meeting informing her school that she would like to attend university when she was older.

A festive meal was organised over the recent holiday period for over 16 year olds. There were 17 young people and 6 members of staff from the leaving care team who came to the meal.



### **Residential Trips**

There have been two residential trip opportunities for looked after children and care leavers. The University of Bedfordshire organised a two night three day trip for young people in year 11. The places were also available to young people from our neighbouring local authorities. There were five Central Bedfordshire looked after children who attended with support from the Participation Officer, the focus of this residential was revision techniques, exam preparation, along with raising aspirations of further and higher education.

The Youth Support team worked alongside the Participation Support Worker and Deputy Manager from the LAC team to organise a number of days looking at independent living skills. This was followed by a residential trip where young people had the opportunity to take part in fun activities. There were eight young people who attended the trip along with the Participation Support Worker and members of staff from the Youth Support Team.

### **Training of Social Workers**

Members of the CiCC have been working with the University of Bedfordshire to provide workshops to undergraduate and post graduate students. The CiCC have developed the workshops to help students to understand 'What makes a good social worker?' from a young persons point of view.

Members of the CiCC developed their own training day for Central Bedfordshire's Newly Qualified Social Workers, the training involved a number of 'ice breakers' and young people talking about what is participation, The Pledge, communication, young people's involvement in meetings and participation events.

### **Training of Foster Carers**

Members of the CiCC have worked with the Fostering team to develop a workshop which is part of the Skills to Foster Training. Young people work with foster carers to create kites which present 'What makes a good foster carer?' and 'How can foster carers ensure the wishes and feelings of young people are listened to?'

Members of the CiCC also attended the information evening for foster carers and presented information to people who were interested in becoming a foster carer.

### **Training for new Members of the CiCC**

Members of the CiCC have created a training programme to support new members. The training will focus on communication skills, interviewing skills, professionalism, equality, confidentiality and peer mentoring. Training has been designed to prepare members for events they may be involved with. For example, interviewing, foster carer training and peer mentoring.

### **Interviews**

There have been a number of interviews for Central Bedfordshire social workers where members of CiCC have been part of the interview process. The young people have developed their own assessment workshop where they ask candidates 'How will you ensure wishes and feelings are represented in care plans and pathway plans?' and 'what is the importance of participation and how will you promote participation to the children you work with?'

One of the interviewees stated *'I found all the young people to be very professional..... They were very clear in giving instructions of what they wanted us to do and were able to start us off. The tasks were fun and they made us interact with both the young people and the other interviewees. The tasks they wanted us to do gave us an opportunity to talk to them, ask them questions, which enabled us to see 'Social Work' through their eyes.'*

Members of the CiCC have worked with National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) and have been part of the interview process for new Independent Visitors.

### **Newsletters & Who Cares Magazines**

Members of the CiCC have worked to develop a Newsletter which has been sent to all looked after children along with Who Cares? Magazine. The newsletter contained information about the CiCC and their work with an update on the summer activities, Awards Evening and other activities.

We have subscribed to Who Cares? Magazine for the next year, these are quarterly and there are two magazines for different age groups. The magazines contain information about being in care as well as fun activities and some interviews with celebrities.

Members of the CiCC will be taking part in a Young Editors Workshop which will take place at the Who Cares? Trust head office in London. The Young Editors group will give their views, ideas and comments and will be looking at how best to develop the magazine.

### **Consultation / Fun Day**

The consultation / fun day is being developed by members of the CiCC. The young people have discussed having a day where fun activities take place and where children and young people have the opportunity to give their feedback on the services they receive.

### **Participation Work Plan**

The Participation Officer has continued to work towards the work plan that was agreed in February 2012 and support the priorities agreed by the CiCC.

In September 2012 a secondment opportunity for an additional Full Time Participation Officer was agreed and appointed. This contract will end in March 2013.

Participation Officers continue to promote participation to the social work teams, attending team meetings to promote the work of the CiCC and wider participation.

The LAC information packs have been distributed to all of the social work teams to ensure young people coming into care have access to this comprehensive information. Feedback from social workers has been that these are a useful resource for them to promote discussion with a newly looked after child. Young people's feedback has been that they like the packs and these help to answer some of the questions they have during a confusing and scary time for them.

A survey has been developed and will be sent out to parents of Looked After Children identified by social workers to ensure the views of parents are used within Service development.

### **Forward Plan**

To further develop and increase the number of looked after children and young people and care leavers engaged in the CiCC meetings and activities.

To support members of the CiCC with their priorities for the next year and to help and guide them to achieve these priorities.

Participation Groups - for the following groups need to be developed:

- Children in Need
- Children Subject to Child Protection Plans
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
- Children with Disabilities
- Parents of Looked After Children

To work with members of the CiCC to further develop relationships with members of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Young people would like to share their work with Members on a more regular basis. They have suggested that an event could be organised where young people can display their work that has been done over the past year, with an opportunity to share information. This would also allow members of the Corporate Parenting Panel to meet with members from all of the CiCC groups. This could be called the CiCC Conference which could happen on a yearly basis and could also be open to Members who are not part of the Corporate Parenting Panel as well as senior managers within the local authority.

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## **Children in Care Council Work Programme Priorities for 2013 – 2014**

### **Children in Care Council Meetings**

- To continue to develop the four different CiCC groups, ensuring each group has their own identity and work plan.
- Monthly Meetings will be arranged for the two older CiCC groups. Meetings for the younger groups will take place four times per year.
- There will be two activity based Participation Groups one for over 16 year olds and one for young people between the ages of 8 and 15. These activities will encourage the wider Looked after / Leaving Care population to attend informal consultation events whilst taking part in fun activities ensuring the views of looked after children are heard.
- Representatives to attend activities to act as peer mentors to younger children in care.
- Representatives of the CiCC to work towards gaining the views of the wider CiCC.
- Promote the work of the CiCC and recruit more young people to be part of the CiCC meetings and using other means of communication as requested by current members of the CiCC.
- Representatives of the CiCC will meet with workers and young people from the children with disabilities team to ensure their views are also heard.

### **Links to Corporate Parenting Panel**

- CiCC members to attend Corporate Parenting Panel three times per year.
- CiCC members to develop a CiCC conference.
- CiCC members to meet with Director of Children's Services and Lead Councillor for Children's Services twice a year.
- CiCC members to meet with Assistant Director and Head of Service three times per year.
- Additional meetings can be arranged as and when required between CiCC members and members of the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- Information will be presented to Corporate Parenting Panel from the CiCC on the work of the CiCC.

### **Consultation Events**

- Work with Department for Education and The Children's Rights Director to ensure involvement in consultation events for Children in Care.
- Attend regional CiCC meetings and the annual National conference for CiCC organised by Children's Rights Officers and Advocates.
- Attend any other consultation events organised for children in care.

### **Central Bedfordshire Council Consultation**

- Monitoring and reviewing The Pledge to ensure that The Pledge remains up to date and meaningful.
- Consultation on the Pathway Planning process.

- Carry out surveys for Central Bedfordshire's looked after children and leaving care young people to give them the opportunity to give their views.

### **Recruitment and Training of Social Workers and Foster Carers for Central Bedfordshire Council**

- Members of the CiCC have developed a training session for Central Bedfordshire social workers; this will become part of the on going training programme.
- Attend Information Evening for people interested in becoming a foster carer.
- Attend Skills to Foster training and facilitate workshops on 'what makes a good foster carer?'
- For members of the CiCC to be involved in the recruitment and selection process of new social workers and foster carers.

### **Annual Awards Evening**

- Annual Awards Evening for Children in Care and Care Leavers.
- Arrangements for the awards evening will be discussed in CiCC meetings and agreed by members.
- Nomination Forms, Invitations, certificates will be designed by members of the CiCC.

### **School holiday Activities Programme / Activity Based Participation**

- A range of activities will be organised for younger children in care and could also include children on the edge of care.
- Consultation opportunities during the activities, representatives from the CiCC will attend the activities to support and encourage positive peer mentoring.
- Activity days for over 16 year olds to allow for their views to be heard whilst taking part in fun activities and socialising with other care leavers. The activities will also allow positive relationships to be developed with other social workers within the team.

### **Training for Social Work Students at the University of Bedfordshire**

- Work with the University of Bedfordshire and become part of the 'Experts by Experience Group'.
- Engage in training opportunities organised by the University of Bedfordshire.
- Members of the CiCC will be part of the recruitment and selection process for social work students.
- Members of the CiCC will also be part of the training and assessment of social work students.

### **Information for Looked after Children and Care Leavers**

- Information to be put onto a web site so that it can also be accessible to all looked after children.
- Members of the CiCC will also be involved in the design of an information pack for young people leaving care, ensuring it contains

relevant information they need to help them make the transition to adulthood.

- Members of the CiCC to explore the use of social networking sites as a way to share information.

#### **Newsletter to Children in Care**

- A regular newsletter to be sent to all looked after children on the work of the CiCC, future events, consultation etc.

#### **Website Specifically for Children in Care**

- Website/page to be developed by the members of the CiCC. Website/page to contain:
  - Information from LAC Packs.
  - Opportunity to promote consultation and feedback.
  - Contact information for teams within Central Bedfordshire Council.
  - External agencies and other useful web sites.
  - Information on the work of the CiCC including upcoming meeting dates.
  - Information on the Activity Days.

#### **A Fun Day / Charity Day / Consultation Day**

- Consultation Day, to include fun activities with different services participating.
- To have the option of raising money for local charity.

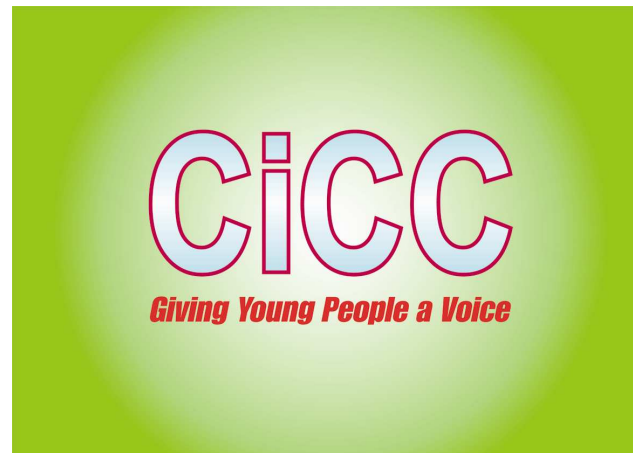
#### **Residential Trip for Members of the CiCC**

- A residential trip specifically for members of the CiCC as a reward for their work.
- This residential trip will allow all the members of the CiCC to take part in a number of sessions to complete the CiCC tasks as outlined in our priorities.
- Members would be able to take part in team building exercises and other fun activities do develop their life skills.

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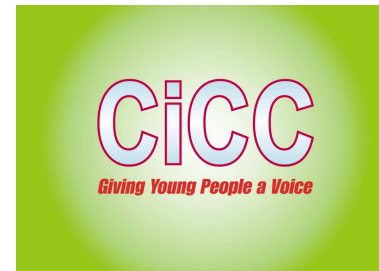


# The Children in Care Council



# The CiCC

- Following the Awards Evening more young people showed an interest in joining the CiCC, Due to this increase the meetings have been split into age ranges. This enables more young people to have a say on the services they receive.
- There are now 4 different CiCC groups:-
  1. Over 18 years.
  2. 16 – 18 year olds.
  3. 12 – 16 year olds.
  4. 8 -12 years.
- Meetings for groups 1 & 2 will take place monthly and groups 3 & 4 will take place during the school holidays.

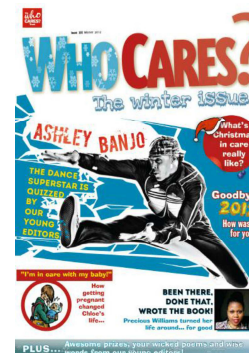
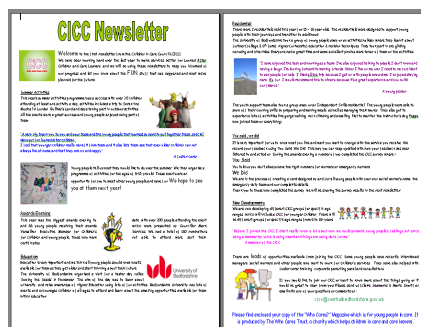
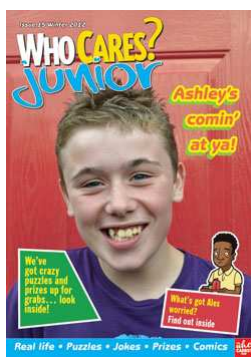


# The CiCC

- We have attended the National CiCC event which was organised by 'A National Voice' where CiCC's from all over the country came together to share ideas.
- Members of the CiCC attended the Eastern Region Corporate Parenting Event. We were asked to give our views on the regional welfare reforms and raising the participation age.

# The CiCC

- We have sent our first newsletter out to all looked after children along with the Who Cares? Magazine which we have subscribed to.



- The Who Cares Magazines will be organising a workshop for our young people in the February half term. Two members of the CiCC will also be attending a Young Editors Workshop where young people help to improve the magazine.
- During the Fostering inspection a member of the CiCC attended a focus group with younger children in care. During the session we created houses which represented what was good about 'our foster home'. We will work with foster carers during their training to create houses to represent their foster home.

# The CiCC Conference

- We would like to organise an annual CiCC conference for members of Corporate Parenting Panel.
- The conference will allow you to meet with all of the different CiCC groups, especially those members who are not available to attend the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- This will also be our opportunity to show you the achievements and work of each of The CiCC Groups.
- The conference could also be open to Senior Managers from Central Bedfordshire Council.

# Participation

- There have been a number of activity based participation days organised - Young people attended a Pony Day organised by the British Horse Society, young people spent the day grooming and caring for the ponies and then spent time learning to ride. There was also an activity day at the University of Bedfordshire.
- A trip to London was organised for members of the CiCC as a thank you for all of our hard work over the last year.
- A Festive Meal took place in December, 18 young people attended and it is hoped that from this there will be new members recruited to the CiCC.

# Participation

- 8 children who were between the ages of 8 and 13 attended a day at the Luton Campus to find out more about going to University. The day was very successful and enjoyed by all. We are hoping to arrange some more days to raise the aspirations of all our looked after children.
- Following the 'Reach your Goal' residential last year shadowing opportunities have been offered to young people. One member spent a day with a student studying Journalism.
- The University will be arranging another residential for young people in Years 10 & 11 which will take place during the Easter Holidays.

# Awards Evening 2012

- The Achievement Awards took place on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> September at Priory House, Chicksands.
- There were around 180 nominations for looked after children and care leavers, with 88 young people attending the actual event. Over 200 people attended the Awards evening, giving us the highest turn out yet!





# Awards Evening 2012

- Young people who attended the event were entertained by one of our care leavers, who performed on the night, there was also a DJ, a circus skills entertainer, magician and a paper plane making competition organised by a social worker from the team.
- Karen Murray, Personal Adviser said 'my young person's acoustic performance was brilliant and she was an amazing credit as a role model to other looked after children of what can be achieved.'
- Young people were also asked to write and display what they are most proud of on the achievement wall. One young person wrote 'I am most proud of achieving a special award and standing up in front of all those people and not getting red and rosy cheeks.'

# Awards 2012

This slide will contain Photos from the awards evening.

# Awards 2013

We as members of the CiCC would like your input of the following -

- Due to the number of attendees at this years Awards Evening we will need to consider the way in which the awards are organised.
- Members of the CiCC have discussed using a different venue for the event.
- Splitting the age range for the evening and having two different events.
- Dates for the awards evening in 2013 need to be agreed. Currently the chambers are available Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> October or Friday 15<sup>th</sup> November.

# Any Questions?