

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



**please ask for** Leslie Manning  
**direct line** 0300 300 5132  
**date** 26 September 2013

## NOTICE OF MEETING

### CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Date & Time

**Monday, 7 October 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, D Bowater, N B Costin, Mrs S A Goodchild, N J Sheppard and  
B Wells

[Named Substitutes:

Cllrs P N Aldis, Mrs G Clarke, Mrs D B Gurney, K Janes, B J Spurr and  
A M Turner]

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

Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services  
Director of Social Care, Health and Housing (or the Head of Housing Services  
or their representative if the Director of Social Care, Health and Housing is  
unable to attend)  
Head of Leisure Services (or their representative if the Head of Leisure  
Services is unable to attend)

**Carers (non-voting)**

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

## AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**

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 22 July 2013 (copy attached).

3. **Members' Interests**

To receive from Members any declarations of interest.

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

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

### Reports

| Item | Subject   | Page Nos. |
|------|---|-----------|
| 5    | <b>Entitlements for Looked After Children and Care Leavers - Workshop</b> | * 11 - 12 |

Members of the Children in Care Council will be attending the All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in the House of Commons on 23 October 2013 to discuss entitlements for Looked After Children and care leavers. A copy of the outcome of an earlier meeting of the Group held in February 2013 is attached.

Prior to attending the Group meeting in October the Children in Care Council wishes to discuss the following question with members of the Corporate Parenting Panel in a workshop session:

***'As Corporate Parents, how will you ensure young people are receiving the entitlements they are due to receive as a looked after child or care leaver?'***

- 6      **Quarter One Report on the Fostering Service - April to June 2013**      \*      13 - 18

To consider a report outlining activity in the fostering service during Quarter One, with a comparison to previous quarters.

- 7      **Interim Report of the Virtual School for Looked After Children**      \*      19 - 28

To consider a report on the role of the Virtual School and the outcomes for Looked After Children in the Academic Year 2012/13, the steps taken since September 2012 to develop the role of the Virtual School in order to improve outcomes for Looked After Children and young people and the next stages in the School's development.

**CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 22 July 2013

**PRESENT**

**Elected Members (voting)**

Cllrs:

M A G Versallion (Chairman)  
A L Dodwell (Vice-Chairman)  
Mrs A Barker  
D Bowater  
N B Costin  
Mrs S A Goodchild  
N J Sheppard

**Officers (voting)**

Mrs E Grant – Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children’s Services

**Carers (non-voting)**

Mrs H Philips

Apologies for Absence:     Mrs    J Crawford  
  Mrs    J Ogle

Members in Attendance:    Cllr    P N Aldis

Officers in Attendance     Mrs F Mckirdy             – Head of Adoption and Fostering  
  Mr L Manning             – Committee Services Officer

Others in Attendance:     Mrs C York                 – Designated Nurse for Looked After Children (NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group)

**CPP/13/16    Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 3 June 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

Minute CPP/13/15 – Development of the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP)

Second paragraph – delete ‘and officers’.

**CPP/13/17 Members' Interests**

Councillor Costin declared a general interest as the Chairman of Barnfield College.

Councillor Bowater declared an interest with regard to item 6 (Central Bedfordshire Council Looked After Children Annual Report). The reason given for the declaration was that Councillor Bowater served as a Partnership Governor (Local Authority) on the Council of Governors for the South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (SEPT).

**CPP/13/18 Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman reported that Pete Dudley (Assistant Director Children's Services (Learning & Strategic Commissioning)) would be leaving the Council on 1 October 2013 to join the London Borough of Camden. The Chairman also reported that Fiona Mackirdy (Head of Adoption and Fostering) would be leaving the Council. On behalf of the Panel the Chairman expressed thanks and best wishes to both officers, with especial reference to Ms Mackirdy in view of her outstanding work and her commitment and passion for her job.

Following a Member's comment regarding the way in which Members would receive notice of future personnel changes the Chairman stated that he would raise this issue with the Chairman of the Executive.

**CPP/13/19 Annual Reports for the Adoption Service and Fostering Service**

The Panel received a report which outlined the statutory framework for the submission of annual reports on the adoption and fostering services and summarised the key points contained in the Annual Adoption and Fostering Service Reports for 2012-13. Copies of the Service Reports were attached as appendices to the report. The meeting was aware that the Adoption and Fostering Service was currently a shared service for Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils and that the reports contained information in respect of both Councils.

The Head of Adoption and Fostering introduced the Adoption Agency and Fostering Agency Annual Reports. She highlighted a number of issues for consideration including, in the former, the Council's provision of post adoption support in the form of tracing birth records, associated advice and pre and post reunion support. The Head of Adoption and Fostering suggested that this service could be ended given the growing use of social media and websites such as ancestry.com by individuals to trace their heritage and find birth relatives. Following comment by a Member the Head of Adoption and Fostering stated that despite the provision of training and assistance by the Council on this issue, and the availability of good resources to help individuals prepare for such situations, the impact and use of social media had been powerful. As such she did not think a change to this outcome was likely and the need would be reviewed.

A Member sought clarification on the increase in the number of children being put forward for adoption and fostering. In response the Head of Adoption and Fostering explained that the overwhelming basis for a child being removed from his/her parents was because the Council had concerns that the child would suffer significant harm if he or she remained under parental care. She stressed that the Council attempted to intervene as early as was possible and work with families. She added that there were a small number of cases where it was not possible for the child to return to its immediate family. The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services stated that the rate of increase was comparable with that of other local authorities. She added that there was a related budgetary pressure but that the Council was having to cope with this as well as other authorities were.

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services referred to the positive value of early intervention work starting at a pre-natal point in families though she also stressed that whilst good parenting skills were of obvious importance to a child's development it was also necessary to recognise the negative impact on family wellbeing by such factors as unemployment and homelessness.

Further full discussion then took place as Members sought additional information and clarification with regard issues contained in the reports.

#### **NOTED**

#### **the content of the Annual Adoption and Fostering Service Reports for 2012/13.**

CPP/13/20

#### **Central Bedfordshire Council Looked After Children Annual Report**

Members considered the Annual Report from the NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group on meeting the health needs of those Looked After Children registered with Central Bedfordshire Council. The report covered the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013 but also outlined the current work being undertaken and the challenges facing the service.

In introducing the report the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children reminded Members of the joint inspection of safeguarding and Looked After Children services by Ofsted and the CQC in February 2012 and the finding of 'inadequate' for 'Being Healthy for Looked After Children'. The Designated Nurse then drew Members' attention to the programme of remedial action which had been adopted in response. The meeting noted from the report that the focus for 2012/13 had therefore been to deliver improved access to the service and improved timeliness of health assessments.

In response to a query the Designated Nurse stated that despite an improvement in the timeliness of referrals and the completion of health assessments difficulties remained and, in the first quarter, a backlog had again arisen. As a result a review and been carried out and she had been assured

that the causes had been rectified and a revised system with more resource focus would be in place by the end of the second quarter.

A query was raised regarding the differences in some of the data contained in the report made available to Members and officers and that referred to by the Designated Nurse from what was an updated version of the report. In response the Designated Nurse undertook to send a copy of the updated report to the PA for the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services for distribution as requested to Members and officers of the Panel.

Further discussion followed during which Members commented on various aspects of the report. Particular reference was made to the need to raise GP's awareness of the health needs of Looked After Children and the need to encourage greater participation by GP's in training sessions on this topic.

#### **NOTED**

**the Looked After Children Annual Report for 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013 by the NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group.**

#### CPP/13/21 **Development of the Corporate Parenting Panel**

Members considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services on the outcome of the review of the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

The meeting was reminded that, whilst the joint Ofsted and CQC inspection in February 2012 had not revealed any issues relating to the work of the Panel, Members had wished to ensure that local arrangements met best practice standards. As a result a mixture of desktop reviews and visits to observe the workings of other council's corporate parenting panels had taken place. Arising from this work a number of issues had been identified for further consideration including the frequency and timing of Panel meetings, the style and submission of reports and extending awareness of the Panel's function.

Full discussion took place then took place on the above matters. From the review work undertaken Members were aware that local arrangements came close to best practice but they also acknowledged that changes were required to achieve fuller and more meaningful participation by all parties.

#### **RESOLVED**

- 1 that the frequency and timing of the Corporate Parenting Panel remain unchanged;**
- 2 that informal gatherings prior to the meeting be held in either the Panel meeting room or the café one hour prior to the Panel itself in order to allow discussions with foster carers or members of the Children in Care Council accompanied by the Participation Officer;**



- 3 that members of the Children in Care Council continue to attend meetings of the Panel, accompanied by the Participation Officer;**
- 4 that, when members of the Children in Care Council are not due to attend a Panel meeting, the Participation Officer could, from time to time, make a presentation to the Panel in their absence on a relevant topic;**
- 5 that the seating at Panel meetings be arranged so that Members and officers who serve on the Panel are intermixed;**
- 6 that foster carers be advised of the contact details for ward Members and the lead Member for Children's Services;**
- 7 that invitations to the Annual Awards ceremony continue to be extended to all members of the Panel.**

#### **RECOMMENDED**

- 1 that, in recognition of the role of all officers as corporate parents, membership of the Panel be extended to include the Head of Leisure Services or their representative;**
- 2 that the Head of Housing Services or their representative be invited to attend a Panel meeting when the Director of Social Care, Health and Housing is unable to attend that meeting;**
- 3 that efforts be made to co-opt additional foster carer representatives;**
- 4 that the number of co-opted foster carer representatives expected to attend meetings of the Panel be increased to four.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 11.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.15 p.m.)

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## All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked-After Children and Care Leavers Inquiry into the rights and entitlements of looked-after children and care leavers.

We asked the attendees at the All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked-After Children and Care Leavers in February 2013 what the most important entitlements for looked-after children and care leavers were. We selected the five that they said were most important for looked-after children and for care leavers and these will be what we look at during the Inquiry.

### Five entitlements for looked-after children

1. You must have a care plan that says what your needs are now, what will be done to meet those needs and what your plans are for the future.
2. The care plan must include your views and when deciding what to do people must take those views into consideration.
3. No important decisions, for example, a placement move, about you should be taken without a review meeting being held unless it is an emergency.
4. Looked after young people aged 16-19 should get a £1,200 bursary if they stay in full-time education.
5. When a social worker visits you they must speak to you alone unless you refuse, it is not appropriate at that time or the social worker is unable to.

### Five entitlements for care leavers

1. You can ask your authority for £2,000 for the setting up home allowance. This was the amount that young people agreed, at the regional meetings for Chairs of Children in Care Councils, to ask their local authorities for.
2. Your local authority must provide you with help with costs of being in education or training up until you are 21 (or 25 if you're still in education).
3. Your local authority must provide you with help with the costs of getting and keeping a job (up until the age of 21 if you are in education, employment or training).
4. You must be given a copy, and full explanation, of your assessment and Pathway Plan
5. If you're in higher education, your local authority must provide you with vacation accommodation (or money towards it).

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**Meeting:** Corporate Parenting Panel  
**Date:** 7 October 2013  
**Subject:** Quarter One Report on the Fostering Service – April to June 2013  
**Report of:** Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services  
**Summary:** The report outlines the activity in the fostering service during Quarter One, with comparison to activity in previous quarters.

Contact Officer: Gerard Jones, Assistant Director Children's Services Operations  
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 £6.6 million, including costs of Independent Fostering Agency placements and provision on behalf of 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 comment on the content of the report

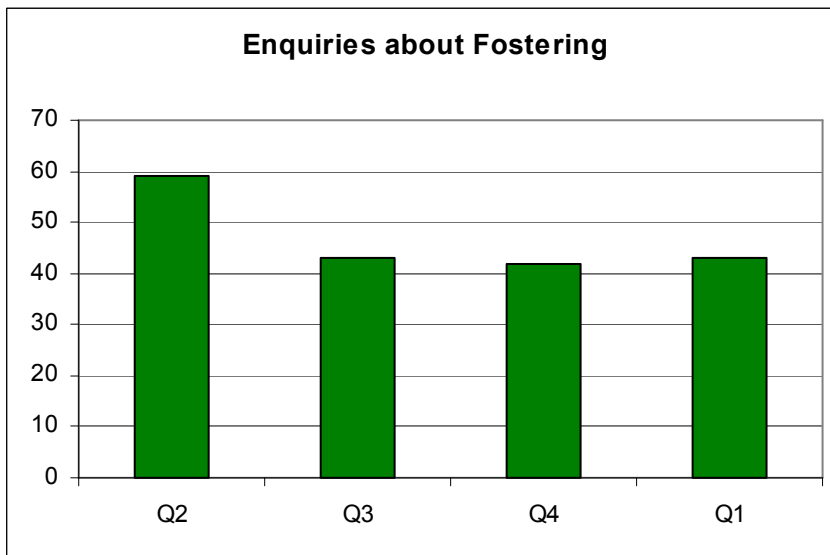
**Background**

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 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 April to June 2013. Comparative data with previous quarters is summarised in the tables in Appendix One

**Recruitment of Foster carers**

12. During the period 43 enquiries were received from members of the public interested in becoming foster carers. This is below the comparable quarter for last year but similar to figures for the last two quarters.

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



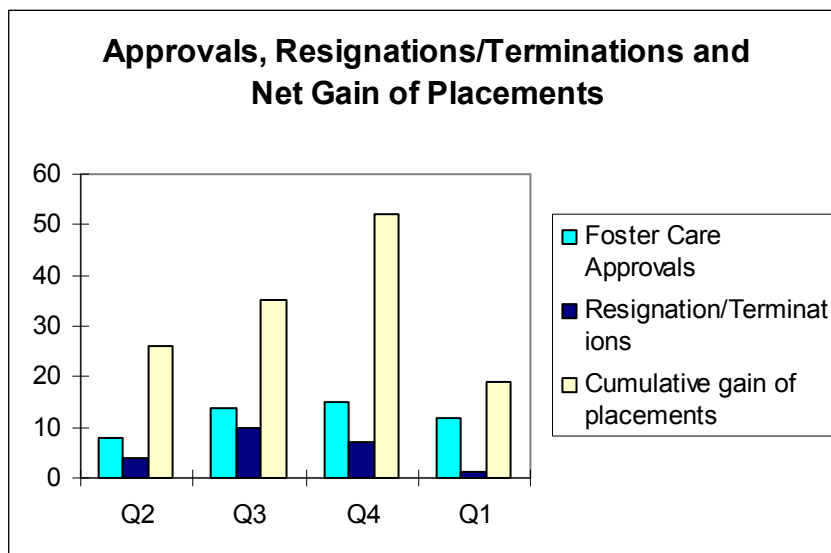
13. 21 assessments of new foster carers commenced, of which 14 were assessments of households caring for a child within their own family. This is a similar average level of activity as the last three quarters.

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



14. 12 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 19 fostering placements in Quarter One.

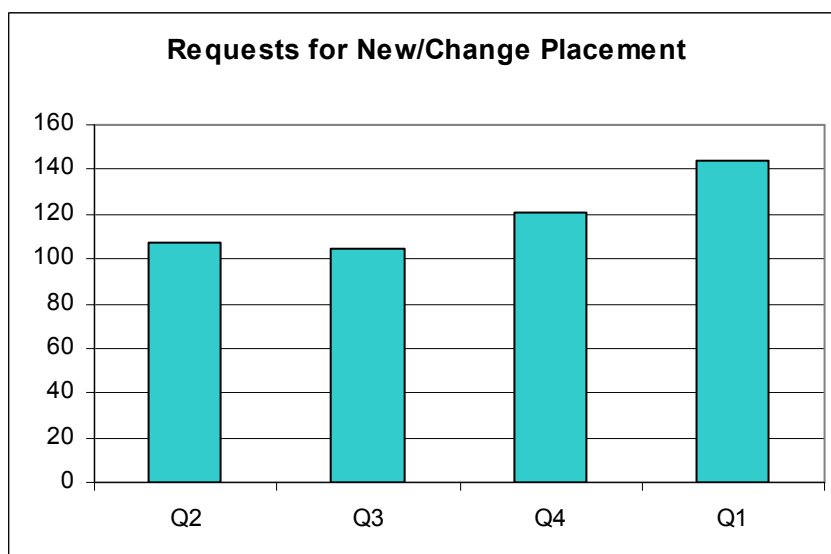
**Chart three shows the total numbers of approvals, resignations/terminations and net gain of placements in the last four quarters.**



### Placements for Children

15. In these 3 months there were 144 requests for new or change of fostering placements. This is an increase and shows an upward trajectory over the last 12 months.

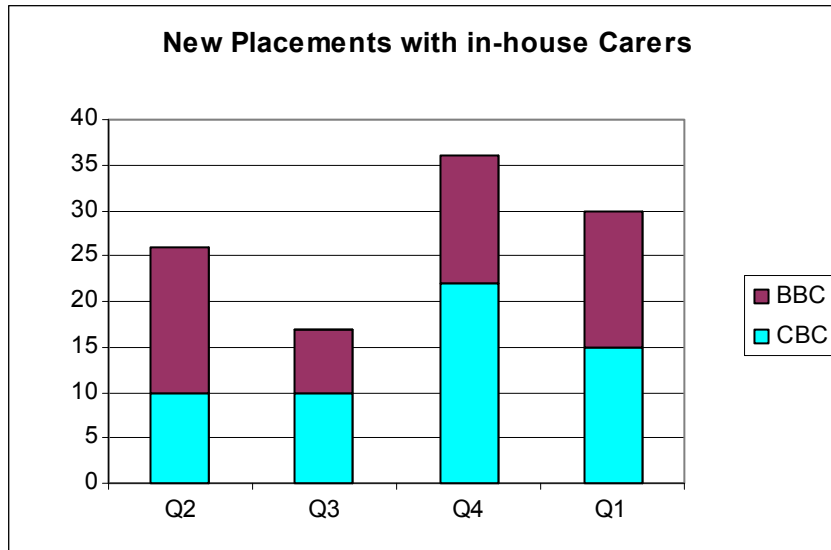
**Chart four shows the total number of requests of both councils for new placements and a change of placement in the last four quarters.**





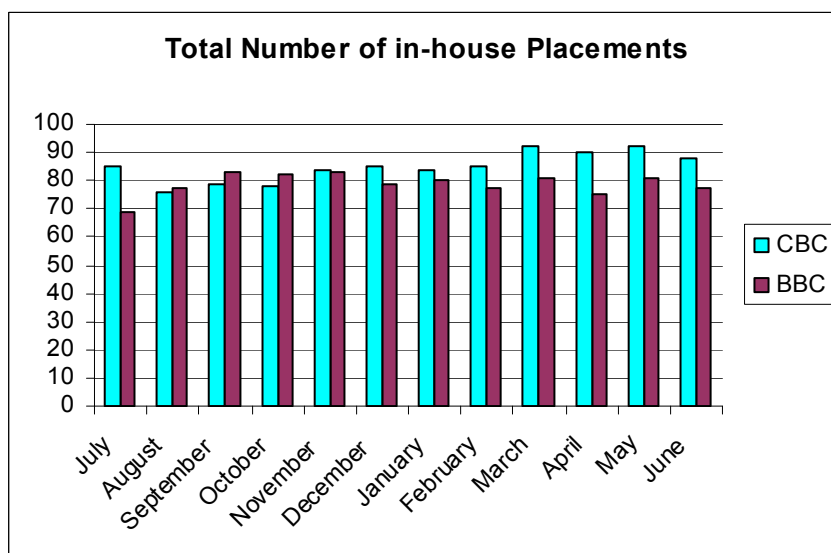
16. 30 newly looked after children were placed with in-house foster carers of whom were 15 Central Bedfordshire children. 25 CBC children were placed in Independent Fostering Agency provision when becoming looked after.

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



17. At 30 June 2013, there were a total of 165 children living with in-house foster carers of which 88 were Central Bedfordshire children. This number has remained relatively consistent for the last three quarters.

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



18. The absolute number of looked after children from Central Bedfordshire living in Independent Fostering Agency provision was 110 at 30 June 2013, an increase of 23 since the last quarter and reflective of the significant increase in the number of looked after children over the period.

### **Training for Foster Carers**

19. 11 training courses took place involving 111 delegates. This included preparation training for prospective foster carers as well as short courses and workshops for approved foster carers.

### **Key Events**

20. Fostering recruitment campaigns took place in this period to tie in with the Fostering Network's national Foster Care Fortnight. Adverts and editorials were placed in local newspapers, articles were published in both Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils' public magazines and via social networking forums on Twitter and Facebook. Two recruitment drop-in events were held, one in each council area. A major leaflet distribution exercise took place with leaflets placed in children's centres, village halls, libraries, church halls and sports centres.
21. The annual foster care social event and awards ceremony took place on 24 June 2013 in the Council Chamber at Priory House, Chicksands. Eleven fostering households were eligible for long service awards, with two of these awards for 20 and 25 years service.

### **Ending of the Shared Service Arrangement**

22. Work has progressed this quarter towards the ending of the shared service arrangement with Bedford Borough Council. The disaggregation of the service is being overseen by a project board comprising lead officers from both councils with 8 work streams. Tasks and key milestones in the project have all been met within target and no significant risks in respect of meeting future milestones have been identified.

### **Appendices:**

None

### **Background Papers: (open to public inspection)**

None

**Meeting:** Corporate Parenting Panel

**Date:** 7 October 2013

**Subject:** Interim Report of the Virtual School for Looked After Children

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

**Summary:** This report provides information on the role of the Virtual School and the outcomes for Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire in the Academic Year 2012/13. It also identifies the steps taken since September 2012 to develop the role of the Virtual School in order to improve outcomes for Looked After Children and young people, and sets out the next stages of its development.

**Advising Officer:** Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services

**Contact Officer:** Paul Harpin, School Intervention Manager and Virtual School Lead

**Public/Exempt:** Public

**Wards Affected:** All

**Function of:** Council

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

The report supports two of the priorities in Central Bedfordshire's Strategic Plan: 'improve educational attainment' and 'protect the vulnerable', and also Central Bedfordshire's Medium Term Plan: Delivering your priorities – Our Plan for Central Bedfordshire 2012-2016 within the specific priority of Improved Educational Attainment.

### **Financial:**

1. The Virtual School is fully funded through the Dedicated School Grant (DSG)

### **Legal:**

2. The Council has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children it looks after regardless of where they live. In Central Bedfordshire, this duty is delivered through the work of the Virtual School for Looked After Children in partnership with schools and other services.
3. The governing bodies of all maintained schools are required under the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 to appoint a Designated Teacher to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children who are on the school roll.

**Risk Management:**

4. The Virtual School ensures that it knows which children are looked after and that there is a Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place for each Looked After Child. The Virtual School monitors the attendance and progress of Central Bedfordshire's Looked After Children, in Central Bedfordshire schools and those living and accessing education in other Council areas.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the Corporate Parenting Panel considers this report and comment on the steps identified to improve outcomes for Looked After Children in the future.**

**The Virtual School**

5. Councils work in a number of ways to drive forward improvements in the educational achievements of the children they look after. In Central Bedfordshire this is managed through the work of the Virtual School for Looked After Children.
6. The Virtual School must ensure that each looked after child achieves optimum educational outcomes at each stage of his or her schooling. In order to achieve this the Virtual School:
  - (a) ensures that there is a system to regularly track and monitor the attendance, attainment and progress of Looked After Children;
  - (b) ensures that each Looked After Child has a robust and effective personal education plan (PEP);
  - (c) works with schools to improve overall attainment of Looked After Children by challenging schools to improve the achievement and progress of individual children through good use of their resources;
  - (d) works with social workers to improve attendance, attainment and progress of Looked After Children;
  - (e) ensures Looked After Children who are educated in schools outside of Central Bedfordshire Council receive the right support to achieve the best educational outcomes
7. This Interim Report contains the provisional educational outcomes for Looked After Children for the academic year 2012/13 which are, as yet, not validated. This approach was agreed by Corporate Parenting Panel in March 2013. The annual report which comes to the Corporate Parenting Panel in March will include all data which has been collected from schools and validated, and will include comparative data with other Councils.

## Background

8. The Virtual School for Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire was established in September 2009. It has pupils on roll who are in the care of Central Bedfordshire Council and who are being educated in Central Bedfordshire schools or in schools in other authorities. In addition, the Virtual School has pupils on its roll who are living within Central Bedfordshire and who attend Central Bedfordshire schools, but who are in the care of other councils. The total number of Central Bedfordshire pupils of statutory school age who were part of the Virtual School at any point over the academic year 2012/2013 was 170. This number includes pupils who may have come in and out of care across the year.
9. There is a statutory requirement to monitor the progress of all children who are looked after and to ensure that each Looked After Child has a Personal Education Plan (PEP). The PEP for a Looked After Child is the main means by which the Virtual School, social workers and designated teachers in school monitor the educational attainment and progress of every Looked After Child. The PEP records children's' previous educational experiences and attainment as well as setting targets for future achievement. The nominated social worker is responsible for instigating the writing of the PEP with the designated teacher. Completed PEPs are held by the Virtual School.
10. Staff in the Virtual School liaise with Designated Teachers to ensure schools have high aspirations for their looked after children and support schools in setting appropriate, measurable targets for progress. There is a quality assurance checklist for all new PEPs which ensures that they are of a consistently high standard. PEPs are reviewed at least every six months. Appropriate challenge and support is provided where there are issues and when a child is not making at least expected progress.
11. In April 2011 the Government introduced the Pupil Premium. This is paid to schools for all Looked After Children who have been in care for six months or more. The amount allocated per child for 2012/13 was £623 and for April 2013/14 it was increased to £900. It will increase again in April 2014. Through PEP reviews, schools are challenged to identify the impact of Pupil Premium funding on the achievements of Looked After Children. Amendments to the PEP now include a question on how the school uses the Pupil Premium for eligible children to enable the Virtual School to track its use. The impact of the Pupil Premium on the progress and outcomes of Looked After Children is now also a core focus for inspection of schools within the new Ofsted Framework. The Virtual School is collating examples of good practice through its Governing Body.

12. In September 2012 as a consequence of a service restructure and in order to focus the Virtual School on improving standards, the School Intervention Manager and Virtual School Lead took on the responsibility for the Virtual School. The roles and responsibilities of the Virtual School staff were reviewed and amended to reflect a more strategic role which is resulting in schools relying less upon direct external support for Looked After pupils and being enabled to take responsibility for attainment and progress of Looked After Children themselves. This is currently achieved through analysing data and providing challenge to schools, and the providing advice over the telephone or face to face and through attendance at PEP reviews twice a year. The role of the Virtual School Head teacher is being made statutory in the Children and Families Bill 2013.

### **Exclusions**

13. In the Academic Year 2012/13 there were a total of 132 days lost as a result of fixed term exclusions of Looked After Children from schools and this related to 18 different pupils. This compares to 141.5 days lost in 2011/12 relating to 20 Looked After Children. There was 1 permanent exclusion during 2012/13 as there was in 2011/12. Whenever there is the threat of a permanent exclusion the Virtual School will contact the school to explore all the options available including a change of placement. Schools are actively discouraged from permanently excluding Looked After Child, and all other options are explored. Fixed terms exclusions will be addressed as a priority in this academic year as every day of education lost to fixed term exclusion will impact negatively on outcomes.
14. The Virtual School works with the Inclusions Officer who provides advice on exclusions in order to support schools in recognising the impact of exclusion on a Looked After Child, and to help schools to uphold the Council's policy that Looked After Children are not permanently excluded.

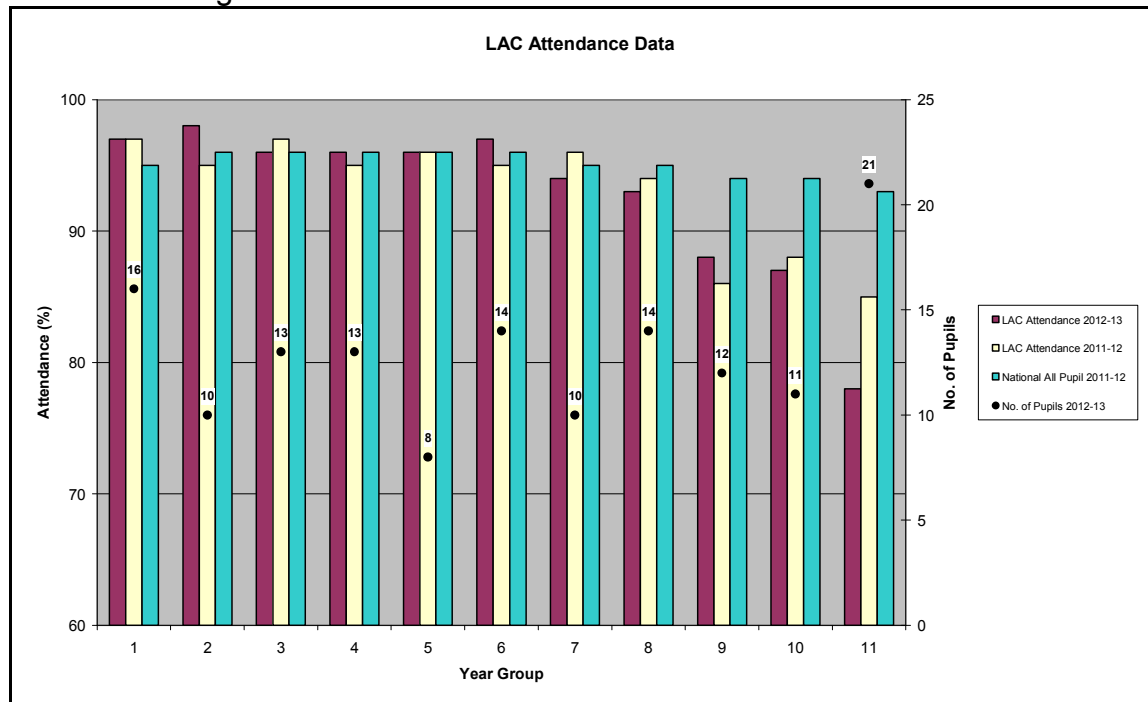
### **Attendance**

15. Until October 2012 attendance information was collected retrospectively on a termly basis from Designated Teachers on all Looked After Children. This process had meant the Council was unable to follow up absences until it was too late to take action to improve attendance. Since October 2012 'Welfare Call' has been commissioned to collect attendance data on a daily basis, and any concerns regarding unauthorised absences are discussed on the same day as the absence occurs with carers, social workers and the Virtual School.
16. This system enables the Virtual School to generate attendance data which can be regularly interrogated and shared, and appropriate actions identified immediately to support pupils' improved attendance.
17. Attendance data for the 2012/13 academic year is shown in Table 1 below. It is important to note that these figures reflect small cohorts of pupils and as a result the attendance of each child has a significant impact on the overall averages.

18. Table 1 indicates that Central Bedfordshire pupils' attendance in 2012/13 was broadly in line with or above the national average attendance for all pupils for 2011/12 (national data not available until February 2014) in year groups 1-6, but below the national average in year groups 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. The gap is particularly significant in years 9, 10 and 11.
19. In year 9, 1 pupil's attendance was only 48% and this impacted adversely on the overall average within a small cohort. This pupil was newly looked after, and it took time to identify the most appropriate placement for him, which impacted on his attendance. Since then his attendance has improved and is regularly monitored.
20. In year 10 the overall results were influenced adversely by 1 pupil whose attendance was 45%. This pupil has challenging behaviour, but the designated teacher at the school has taken a range of appropriate approaches to support him and is working well with the Virtual School and foster carers to ensure an individualised curriculum is in place and short term targets are set that will support improved attendance.
21. In year 11 there were 5 pupils whose attendance varied between 25% and 56% and this affected the overall average adversely. All of these pupils had significantly challenging behaviour, and the Virtual School has worked alongside carers, social workers and school staff to improve attendance. Improving attendance has been the core focus of the PEP reviews. One pupil had home tutoring to support her particular needs while a new placement was identified. Due to this support this pupil achieved a GCSE in English.
22. Table 1 Attendance figures for Looked After Children by year group: CBC (2012/13) v National averages (2011/12).

| .Year Group | No of Pupils | CBC LAC Attendance 2012-13 | CBC LAC Attendance 2011-12 | National All Pupils 2011-12 |
|-------------|--------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1           | 16           | 97%                        | 97%                        | 95%                         |
| 2           | 10           | 98%                        | 95%                        | 96%                         |
| 3           | 13           | 96%                        | 97%                        | 96%                         |
| 4           | 13           | 96%                        | 95%                        | 96%                         |
| 5           | 8            | 96%                        | 96%                        | 96%                         |
| 6           | 14           | 97%                        | 95%                        | 96%                         |
| 7           | 10           | 94%                        | 96%                        | 95%                         |
| 8           | 14           | 93%                        | 94%                        | 95%                         |
| 9           | 12           | 88%                        | 86%                        | 94%                         |
| 10          | 11           | 87%                        | 88%                        | 94%                         |
| 11          | 21           | 78%                        | 85%                        | 93%                         |
| Total       | 142          | 93%                        | 93%                        | 95%                         |

Chart 1 Attendance figures for Looked After Children by year group: CBC v National averages



23. Attendance can be low where pupils have moved placement or have spent some time waiting for a school place in other authorities, or where they have had periods on part-time timetables. The Virtual School works with other professionals to ensure full attendance is in place. Part time timetables are only approved if they are in the best interests of the child and are for a short period and kept under regular review. In the past year 1 pupil in year 9, 3 pupils in year 10 and 4 pupils in year 11 have had part time timetables for limited periods of time.
24. Care Planning Guidance and Regulations (2010) suggest that unless it is an emergency, students in Key Stage 4 should not move care placement unless a school placement is available. 3 KS4 pupils moved placement during 2012/13.
25. The Virtual School works in partnership with social care colleagues to commission care placements which can maintain school placements whenever possible.
26. All individual pupils' attendance records are tracked and actions identified at PEP reviews and more frequently when required to ensure that there is improved attendance for each of them. A focus for 2013/2014 is to ensure that part time timetables are fully supplemented with appropriate full time education opportunities to maximise outcomes. The Virtual School will also focus on ensuring that if a looked after child is fixed term excluded, alternative provision is in place on the first day of this exclusion.



## **Pupils' Achievement**

27. Welfare Call has been commissioned to collect pupil achievement data since December 2012 to enable the Virtual School team to analyse standards and progress on a termly basis. This element of the commission is not yet being delivered as it should be to support planning for challenge and support. The Virtual School Lead is working with the company to address this. This element of the commission is being reviewed.

### **Key Stage 1 results**

28. a There were 9 pupils in this cohort with eight pupils attending Central Bedfordshire schools and 1 an out of authority school. 4 pupils (44%) achieved L2+ in English and 5 pupils (55%) achieved L2+ in mathematics, which is in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1. 1 pupil (11%) achieved L2+ in reading and mathematics but L1 in writing, so improving writing is the focus for this pupil. 3 pupils achieved L1 in all areas, of which one pupil was newly looked after. All of these pupils made progress in line with their targets, and monitoring this has been a key feature of their PEP review. 1 pupil in a Special School made appropriate progress within P levels.
- b The national data for the children looked after continuously for 12 months during the year ending 31 March 2012 shows that, at the end of Key Stage 1, 67% of pupils achieved L2 and above in reading, 57% in writing and 71% achieved the expected level in mathematics. Given the very small cohort of KS1 pupils in Central Bedfordshire it would not be appropriate to draw any conclusions in comparing results with national averages, but the Virtual School ensures that each pupil has the right support in place to maximise their progress. This is monitored.

### **Key Stage 2 provisional outcomes**

29. a There were 12 pupils in the cohort with 10 attending Central Bedfordshire schools and 2 in out of authority schools. Overall 8 pupils (66%) achieved level 4+ in English and 7 pupils (58%) achieved L4 in mathematics. These pupils are on track to achieve 5A\*-Cs at GCSE, including English and maths and their progress will be tracked. They should then progress to A levels and on to higher education. 3 pupils (25%) achieved L2 or L3 in English, and 4 pupils (33%) achieved L2 or L3 in mathematics. These pupils made at least expected levels of progress from the end of KS1, and one of them made better than expected progress, having been assessed as achieving within the P levels at the end of KS1. Monitoring of their progress has been a key feature of their PEP reviews. The remaining pupil, educated in a Special School, made appropriate progress within the P levels. Designated Teachers have tracked progress from the end of Key Stage 1 and they have been encouraged to ensure that Pupil Premium is used to support these pupils effectively this year so that their individual needs are met and they can demonstrate the impact of the Pupil Premium.

- b The national data for the children looked after continuously for 12 months during the year ending 31 March 2012 shows that at the end of Key Stage 2, 50% achieved L4+ in English and mathematics. The small Central Bedfordshire cohort exceeded these national age related expectations and standards. However, it is important to track each individual pupil's progress.

**Key Stage 4 provisional outcomes:**

30. In 2012/2013 there were 21 pupils in Year 11 with 5 educated in Central Bedfordshire mainstream schools, 2 being home tutored at the time of the GCSE examinations and 2 who attended the Central Bedfordshire Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). The remaining 12 pupils were educated Out Of Authority (OOA) schools, and of this group 4 were educated in mainstream schools.
31. 5 A\*-C:
- 1 pupil educated in a Central Bedfordshire Upper School achieved 5 A\* - C including English and maths and a second pupil educated OOA achieved five A\* - C. These 2 pupils represented 10% of the overall cohort.
32. 5 A\* - G:
- 2 pupils (10%) achieved 5 A\* - G with 1 attending a Central Bedfordshire Upper School and 1 educated OOA.
33. GCSE Candidates:
- 6 pupils were entered for GCSE examinations with 3 of them educated OOA. 2 pupils within this group gained 1 GCSE each. Of the remaining 4 pupils, 2 attended OOA Special Schools and 2 attended the Central Bedfordshire Pupil Referral Unit. The 2 Central Bedfordshire pupils who attended the PRU were subject to 15 fixed term exclusions during the year totalling 27 days. They were the only Year 11 pupils to be excluded during the year. The PRU closed at the end of the academic year 2013.
34. Pupils not entered for GCSE.
- 11 pupils (52%) were not entered for GCSE. Three of these pupils attended Central Bedfordshire Special Schools and five attended Special Schools / alternative provision OOA and were following an alternative appropriate curriculum for them.
35. Those pupils with poor attendance in Year 11 did not achieve well academically with only one of them gaining one pass at GCSE. Analysis of this data identifies a clear priority for 2013/14 to ensure that looked after children if fixed term excluded receive an appropriate full time education provision from the first day of the exclusion and do attend school. This will be a priority within the Virtual School Improvement Plan.

## Governance

36. The Council has investigated models of governance for Virtual Schools which will support the further development of the Virtual School in 2013/14 and ensure that it is cognisant of recent Department for Education best practice guidance.
37. The Governing Body has been constituted and met for the first time in July 2013. Its key role is to provide appropriate levels of challenge and support to the Virtual School head teacher, and to schools. It will evaluate the impact of actions within the improvement plan, and will ensure that appropriate actions are included in the plan to address the key priorities identified from the data. It is chaired by a head teacher, and has representatives from all phases of school, plus representatives from social care and health, a foster care representative and a Councillor.
38. There are now stronger links across agencies and with Virtual School leads across the country in order to identify best practice that can be implemented in Central Bedfordshire. The leadership of the Virtual School has been reviewed for 2013/2014 in the light of the Children and Families Bill 2013 so that the leadership has a single focus on ensuring the improvement of outcomes for Looked After children.

## Priority Actions for 2013/14

39. In order to improve the outcomes for Looked After Children the priorities of the Virtual School will be jointly identified with the Head of Service for Looked After Children and set out within a Virtual School Improvement Plan which will be agreed with the Governing Body, and will focus on:
  - a ensuring that Looked After Children attend school well, in line with their peers. This will be achieved through:
    - the systematic monitoring of attendance data provided by Welfare Call for each pupil, with actions identified to support improved attendance.
    - challenge to schools and foster carers directly and through the evaluation of PEP reviews.
    - providing schools with clear guidance on alternatives to fixed term exclusions and part time timetables, and evaluating the impact of that;
    - supporting all key transition points in the child's education.
  - b ensuring that Looked After Children are placed promptly in schools when moving council areas.
  - c strengthening the school's abilities to meet the needs of Looked After Children. This will be achieved through:
    - the challenge provided by Virtual School staff at PEP reviews;
    - the challenge provided through the Virtual School Head teacher and the Governing Body;
    - analysis of the impact of schools use of Pupil Premium;
    - targeted CPD and annual training which focuses upon maximising pupils' achievements.

- d further improving the quality of PEPs by
  - quality assuring all PEPs (Virtual School staff);
  - sharing good practice through subsequent PEP reviews, CBTSP good practice website and annual training.
  
- e ensuring that schools intervene promptly and effectively if a Looked After Child falls behind their target trajectory by:
  - challenging the designated teacher regarding use of Pupil Premium and other funding to ensure that each pupil is keeping up with or exceeding their expected level of progress;
  - keeping a Virtual School database that monitors each looked after child's progress and ensures intervention if a child is falling behind their expected rate of progress
  
- f Ensuring robust monitoring and tracking of all 16-21 (or25) year old young people, and making sure they access further education, training and employment and are in suitable accommodation by contributing to the Support for Success Panel.
  
- g embedding the role of the governing body, providing appropriate levels of challenge and support.

**Appendices:**

None

**Background Papers:** (open to public inspection)

None