

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



please ask for Leslie Manning
direct line 0300 300 5132
date 13 March 2014

NOTICE OF MEETING

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Date & Time

Monday, 24 March 2014 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 3 February 2014 (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	Children in Care Council Annual Report for 2013 To consider the Children in Care Council Annual Report for 2013 and Participation Forward Plan for 2014. (Note: There will be an accompanying presentation from representatives of the Children in Care Council).	* 49 - 66
6	Report of the Virtual School for Looked After Children To consider a report on the role of the Virtual School for Looked After Children, the educational outcomes for Looked After Children in the academic year 2012/13 and the measures taken since September 2013 to develop the School's role and thereby improve outcomes for Looked After Children and young people.	* 67 - 84
7	Recruitment & Retention Strategy 2014-15 To receive a presentation by the Interim Recruitment and Marketing Officer on proposals to improve the recruitment and retention of foster carers by the Fostering Service.	

8 **Update Report: Fees and Allowances for Foster Carers**

* 85 - 90

To consider a report outlining the review of the foster care allowance scheme undertaken in order to increase remuneration to the Council's foster carers and help address the high use of independent foster agency placements.

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 3 February 2014

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

Cllrs:

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

Officers (voting)

Mrs J Ogle - Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Carers (non-voting)

Mrs C Andrews

Apologies for Absence: Cllr D Bowater
Mrs H Phillips

Officers in Attendance: Mr A Ahmed – Team Manager 13+ Transition and Leaving Care
Mrs J Dickinson – Head of Leisure Services
Mr G Jones – Assistant Director Children's Services Operations
Mr T Keaveney – Assistant Director Housing Services
Mr L Manning – Committee Services Officer
Mrs C Seamarks – Personal Advisor/Participation Support Worker
Mr E Wong – Head of Corporate Parenting
Mr N Wood – Interim Head of Service for Adoption and Fostering

Others in Attendance: Mrs C York - Designated Nurse for Looked After Children (Bedfordshire and Luton Clinical Commissioning Groups)

Representatives - Children in Care Council

CPP/13/34 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 2 December 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CPP/13/35 **Members' Interests**

Councillor Mrs A Barker declared an interest as a member of the Council's Adoption Panel.

Councillor A L Dodwell declared an interest as a member of the Council's Fostering Panel.

CPP/13/36 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman welcomed Mr Edward Wong, the newly appointed Head of Corporate Parenting, to his first meeting of the Panel and reminded the meeting of the work that this officer had previously undertaken in relation to health assessments for Looked After Children. The Panel noted that the current Interim Head of Service for Adoption and Fostering would continue to remain in post for a temporary period.

The Chairman advised the meeting that Mrs H Phillips, a co-opted foster carer representative on the Panel, had received an MBE in the New Year's Honours List for her work as a carer. The Panel expressed its congratulations on receiving this news.

CPP/13/37 **All Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers - Roles and Responsibilities**

The Panel received a presentation from the Children in Care Council (CiCC) representatives which set out the results of the work carried out in relation to the inquiry on entitlements being undertaken by the All Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

A copy of the slide pack is attached at Appendix A to these minutes.

In addition an action plan was circulated at the meeting setting out, in table format, the key findings and recommendations arising from the national inquiry. The table also contained local actions which had been devised by the Senior Management Team (SMT) in response to the recommendations.

A copy of the action plan is attached at Appendix B to these minutes.

The CiCC representatives then introduced their presentation. When asked what local entitlement issue required improvement they indicated that they thought some social workers lacked an understanding of what entitlements Looked After Children and young people could receive. The Assistant Director

Children's Services Operations explained that this matter had been considered by the SMT and action was scheduled within the action plan. The Assistant Director added that the recommendations in the action plan would be audited and an update report submitted to the Panel in six months. The Head of Corporate Parenting stated that the audit would cover compliance, meeting expectations and increasing social worker knowledge. At the suggestion of the Director of Social Care, Health and Housing the Assistant Director undertook to amend the action plan by including relevant dates and times.

In response to a query on the CiCC a representative of that body explained that it met once a month at various venues. A new chairman was elected at each meeting and minutes taken, typed up and submitted to the following meeting to ensure that decisions had been implemented.

A Member raised a number of queries regarding the composition of the CiCC, including the length of time in which individual CiCC members had been in care and participation by disabled young people, and how the viewpoints of the different age ranges were represented. In response, and with regard to the participation of disabled children in the CiCC, the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations stated that both he and the CiCC acknowledged that improvement was required in this area. The CiCC intended to recruit disabled young people and the Head of Services for Disabled People had been tasked with taking this forward. On the matter of representation of the views of different age ranges a CiCC representative stated that the older Looked After Children did seek the views of the younger children so they could be reported to the Panel.

In response to a query by the Vice-Chairman regarding the assistance offered to young people when claiming entitlements, the Head of Corporate Parenting advised that officers assisted young people to complete forms. The Team Manager – 13+ Transition and Leaving Care added that personal advisers would sit with young people and establish what entitlements they could receive and then assist them with their applications.

The Panel considered the benefits arising from placing a greater emphasis on holding informal discussions with the CiCC representatives and the use of alternative venues for this purpose. Members and CiCC representatives indicated their support for this approach.

A Member commented on the sense of reality introduced by CiCC representation at the Panel's meetings and asked if it would be possible for at least one CiCC representative to attend each meeting of the Panel in future and report back on developments. Discussion followed on this suggestion which was welcomed by the Chairman and CiCC representatives. It was felt that meeting agendas should contain items of direct relevance to the CiCC in order to ensure their attendance was worthwhile. The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations stated that, if possible, future Panel agendas would contain at least one item which would enable CiCC representative participation and another on which the representative's views would be sought.

The Assistant Director Housing Services informed the CiCC representatives that he would value discussions with the CiCC on accommodation provision for

Looked After Children and being challenged by them on related policy and procedure. The CiCC representatives welcomed this opportunity and the Assistant Director undertook to invite the CiCC to meet him.

NOTED

the presentation on the Entitlements Inquiry for Looked After Children and Care Leavers and the accompanying Action Plan from the Senior Management Team.

RESOLVED

- 1a that an update report on the progress made under the Senior Management Team action plan, which had arisen in response to the outcome of the national Entitlements Enquiry, be submitted to the Panel in six months;**
- 1b that the action plan be amended to include relevant dates and times;**
- 2 that the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations ensure that, if possible, future Panel agendas include at least one item which would enable CiCC representative participation and another on which the representative's views would be sought;**
- 3 that the possibility of the Panel undertaking informal discussions with CiCC representatives at alternative venues be investigated.**

CPP/13/38 **The Experience for Looked After Children with Housing**

The Panel received a presentation from the Assistant Director Housing Services and the Team Manager – 13+ Transition & Leaving Care entitled 'Suitable Accommodation for Looked After Children and Care Leavers'.

A copy of the slide pack is attached at Appendix C to these minutes.

The Assistant Director Housing Services and Team Manager introduced their presentation and expanded on the issues contained within it as they went. During the introduction the Assistant Director explained that, under the legacy authorities, supported housing provision had largely been centred in the towns of Luton and Bedford. The local authority reorganisation had therefore lead to gaps in service provision within Central Bedfordshire and the resources that were available tended to be used in an uncoordinated way. In addition the matching of suitable support with the accommodation provided was an on-going challenge. The Assistant Director added that the lack of sufficient supported housing provision gave rise to a risk of social disconnection and exclusion amongst some young people. He also stressed the need to ensure that accommodation was not just be affordable but met the needs of client groups.

A Member suggested the provision of accommodation within walking distance of a young person's job or college as this would reduce or remove travel costs. She suggested discussions take place with businesses in towns regarding this point.

Another Member commented that the Council's design guide did not support the future provision of one bedroom accommodation and this could generate shortages. The Assistant Director Housing Services acknowledged this point but explained that this type of accommodation was largely used by older people for whom it was regarded as unsuitable. As a result it was proposed that older people should be encouraged to relocate to more suitable housing stock and the existing one bedroom properties be offered to young people. However, he also indicated that he was aware of the possibility of social isolation arising and that, as a possible alternative, the use of three bedroomed properties by suitable young people was under consideration. He acknowledged that various management issues relating to the use of three bedroomed properties for this purpose remained outstanding.

A CiCC representative informed the meeting of the problems which could arise for young persons who, having succeeded in gaining a tenancy at 16, lost their personal support on reaching 18 and then found they were unable to cope independently due to a lack of life skills training. In response the Assistant Director Housing Services acknowledged the need to work with individuals to ensure that they were taught the right skills to be able to live independently. Discussion took place on the robustness of the Council's procedures in both recognising that a problem existed and then remedying it. The CiCC representative also referred to other matters, such as mental health issues, which prevented a successful move to independent living by some young people and stated that these sometimes remained unrecognised. In response the Head of Corporate Parenting referred to the role of the new Support for Success Panel in ensuring that a gap in personal support did not arise. The Team Manager reminded the meeting of the development of the Independent Life Skills Programme to provide core skills and assured Members that officers were fully focused on the needs of individual young people and their suitability to move to independent living.

A Member felt that the possibility of individual living at 16 was too young and she expressed concerns over safeguarding. She suggested that, instead, a transition period between 16 – 24 years of age should be introduced for young people in order to prepare them for such a major change. The Member then referred to the suggested use of three bedroomed properties and queried the impact of the occupants being able to afford the cost of full Council Tax payments.

The Assistant Director Housing Services explained that the most common cause of homelessness was parental eviction due to either a breakdown in relationships or as a means by which to secure accommodation. He added that the Council's new Allocations Policy would prevent the use of parental eviction as a means to obtain housing. Following further discussion the Assistant Director stated that the new Allocations Policy would clearly articulate what its requirements were and these would be embedded in the Council's Annual Lettings Plan.

In response to a query from the Chairman regarding CiCC input into the new allocation policy the Assistant Director stated that he did not believe there had been specific consultation with Looked After Children. However, he undertook to what consultation had taken place and report back to Members.

Discussion took place on the teaching of life skills, education choices and apprenticeships for Looked After Children.

NOTED

the presentation on suitable accommodation for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the Assistant Director Housing Services submit a report to the Panel setting out the new Allocations Policy for consideration;**
- 2 that the Assistant Director Housing Services submit a report to the Panel setting out the new Housing Pathways for Care Leavers following its development by 30 June 2014;**
- 3 that the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations submit a report to the next meeting of the Panel updating Members on the progress made in encouraging the Council's business partners to offer apprenticeships to Looked After Children.**

CPP/13/39 **The Health of Looked After Children - Six Monthly Update**

The Panel received a slide pack from the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children (Bedfordshire and Luton Clinical Commissioning Groups) which provided Members with the six monthly health update for Looked After Children.

A copy of the slide pack is attached at Appendix D to these minutes.

The Designated Nurse then introduced the slide pack which covered the following matters:

- Numbers of Looked After Children
- Performance Data
- Achievements
- Leaving Care Health Service
- Out of Area LAC and Young People (including the difficulties experienced and the actions taken to mitigate risks).

Arising from the increasing numbers of Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire, the Designated Nurse advised the meeting that her workload was to be divided between two posts, one of which would be responsible for Luton

and the other for the remainder of Bedfordshire, from 1 April 2014. She advised the meeting that she had been appointed to the post covering Bedfordshire.

The meeting then considered the comparative performance data for the periods April – September 2013 and April – December 2013 and the improvements that had been achieved. Reference was made in particular to the data which had been forthcoming from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). The Designated Nurse stressed the positive contribution played by the performance data in the health assessments of Looked After Children and in informing their requirements. In response to query from the Chairman regarding the inclusion of data on the immunisation of Looked After Children the Designated Nurse explained the historical reasons for its absence from her report and the measures she was taking to draw the data together in a spread sheet format. She added that she was unable to express full confidence regarding the accuracy of the data because of the manner in which it was stored and extracted.

Further discussion followed as Members sought clarification on various issues including the possible duplication of the initial health assessment work undertaken for Looked After Children. In response the Designated Nurse stated that the Bedfordshire and Luton Clinical Commissioning Groups were aware of the need to review the health assessment procedure and the Commissioning Manager was currently examining what improvements were required.

Following a request by the Panel the Designated Nurse undertook to ensure that future reports contained a full explanation of the acronyms used.

NOTED

the content of the six monthly update on the health of Looked After Children.

CPP/13/40

Quarter Three Report on the Fostering Service - October to December 2013

The Panel received a report by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services which outlined activity in the Fostering Service during Quarter Three (October to December 2013) with a comparison to previous quarters.

The report contained updates on the following areas:

- Background
- Recruitment of Foster Carers
- Training for Foster Carers
- Key Events and Advertising
- Ending of the Shared Service Arrangement

The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations informed the meeting that, following the end of the joint service arrangement on 31 December, the report covered the final period during which the Fostering Service was a shared service with Bedford Borough Council. Members noted that the disaggregation process itself had been successful with the related staff moves and reallocation of foster carers being carried out without loss of service provision.

The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations stated that, as a result of the disaggregation and in view of the volume of fostering cases to be heard, Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils had introduced their own, separate, Fostering Panels. However, because of the lower overall number of adoption cases the Councils had retained a single, 'shared', Adoption Panel.

In response to Member's query on what, if any seasonal impact took place on foster carer recruitment the Interim Head of Service for Adoption and Fostering stated that family orientated times of year, such as Christmas and the summer holidays, generated a larger number of initial inquiries. However, the level of follow through from enquiries at Christmas was low. He added that the general level of response for the remainder of the year was unpredictable.

Further discussion then took place on the recruitment of foster carers. The foster carer representative present stressed the need to target the recruitment of younger people to become carers and referred to the perceived association of foster caring with older people. In response the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations acknowledged the need to increase the number of younger foster carers and stated that he had taken note of the comments made.

NOTED

the content of the Quarter Three report on the Fostering Service for the period October to December 2013.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 11.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.26 p.m.)

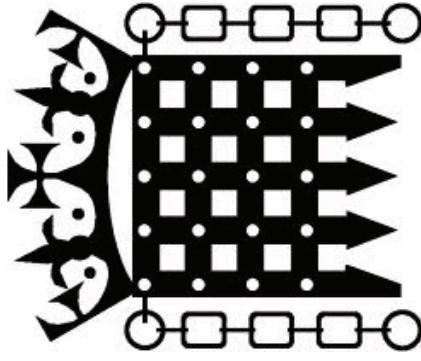


APPENDIX A

Entitlements Inquiry for looked after children and care leavers 2013

Children in Care Council report to
Corporate Parenting Panel

Entitlements Inquiry for looked after children and care leavers 2013



MP Craig Whittaker, wrote to Central Bedfordshire and asked for feedback from children and young people about their entitlements.



Entitlements Inquiry for looked after children and care leavers 2013

Using our peer mentoring scheme some of us spoke to young people during the participation summer activities and collected feedback.

The CiCC then sent the feedback to the All Parliamentary Group (APPG).



Entitlements Inquiry for looked after children and care leavers 2013



The feedback was collected and the APPG wrote up the 10 most important entitlements which they then sent back to us.

The CiCC presented these at Corporate Parenting Panel and asked

"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?"

Lead members suggested actions such as

To undertake independent checks to ensure young people are receiving their entitlements.

Independent Reviewing Officers to discuss entitlements with children during their reviews.

We took these recommendations to share at our meeting at the House of Commons.

Entitlements Inquiry for looked after children and care leavers 2013

12th November we attended the House of Commons to hear the full Entitlements report and speak directly to Edward Timpson – Minister for Children in Care and Chair to the APPG meetings.



We also were able to ask Edward Timpson questions directly about our own experiences which he answered to us as individuals.

Entitlements Inquiry for looked after children and care leavers 2013



The CiCC are driven to empower looked after children and care leavers to have knowledge about their entitlements and how to challenge professionals if they are not receiving what they should be.

To ensure changes were made the CiCC attended the Senior Management Team Meeting (SMT) to share their findings and discuss how will we make positive change.

Entitlements Inquiry for looked after children and care leavers 2013



We presented our findings to Senior Management Team meeting and asked senior managers to consider how they will act on the recommendations made.

Our Head of Corporate Parenting stated that young people will have their entitlements documented in their Pathway/Care Plans. By doing this all young people will be aware of their entitlements.

SMT will provide an update to the CiCC in March which will evidence how their actions have been implemented.



Entitlements Inquiry for looked after children and care leavers 2013



Thank you for meeting with us today.

Please ask us any questions...



APPENDIX B

Entitlement Inquiry for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

The following table represents the key findings and recommendations found from the National Entitlements Inquiry. The Actions were devised from Senior Management Team (SMT).

Findings	Recommendations	Action	Person(s) Responsible
<p>Looked after children and care leavers don't always know about their rights and entitlements. Only 29% of children in care and 17% of care leavers feel that they have all the information that they need.</p>	<p>Independent reviewing officers should report on whether young people know about their rights and entitlements. IRO managers should include this in their annual report to the Corporate Parenting Board.</p> <p>Children in care should be given the contact details of their advocacy agency at every review meeting in an accessible way.</p> <p>Ofsted to consider how information and evidence about looked after children and care leavers' receipt and awareness of legal entitlements could be retrieved and aggregated from the first year of the new inspections.</p>	<p>Independent Reviewing Officers to look at Entitlements and record them. This will go to Corporate Parenting.</p> <p>Independent Reviewing Officers to ensure that standard contact details of the advocacy agency are given at every review.</p>	<p>Head of Quality Assurance</p>
<p>Children and young people are not being told in the right way. They want to be told by their social workers or personal advisors, in person, and they want to have something written down so that they can check what they have been told. They don't want the responsibility of finding information out for themselves.</p>	<p>Statutory agencies should work together to produce a leaflet with best practice examples to be sent to all Children in Care Councils and lead members to support them to seek the views of children and young people in their own area about the best way to provide information about rights and entitlements.</p>	<p>Leaflet to be designed by the Children in Care Council showing examples of best practice. This will be sent to social workers and young people. CiCC to then liaise with Children with Disabilities and develop leaflet to meet the needs of young people under Ken Harvey's service.</p>	<p>Head of Children with Disabilities CiCC, and Participation Officer</p>

APPENDIX B

<p>There are particularly vulnerable groups among the looked after children population who struggle to understand information about rights and entitlements because it is not accessible to them.</p>	<p>Voluntary agencies should work together to produce a best practice guide for frontline workers on communicating complex information to children and young people with additional language, communication and learning needs. Department for Education to ensure information for frontline workers on entitlements is available on its website.</p>	<p>Workshop to be devised for social workers and personal advisors to inform workers of entitlements.</p>	<p>Head of Corporate Parenting</p>
<p>Where and when children and young people are told about their rights and entitlements are important. The length of time that someone has been in care and the age at which they entered care, as well as placement stability and instability, all impact on finding out and retaining information. 25% of children aged 5 to 9 know that they must have a care plan, compared to 68% of 10 to 15 year olds and 76% of 16 year olds and over.</p>	<p>Independent reviewing officers should report on whether young people know about their rights and entitlements. IRO managers should include this in their annual report to the Corporate Parenting Board. Children in care should be given the contact details of their advocacy agency at every review meeting in an accessible way. Care planning regulations should explicitly require social workers to share information about rights and entitlements regularly and not just on entry to care.</p>	<p>Independent Reviewing Officers to look at Entitlements and record them. This will go to Corporate Parenting. Independent Reviewing Officers to ensure that standard contact details of the advocacy agency are given at every review.</p>	<p>Head of Quality Assurance</p>

APPENDIX B

<p>Those who care for and work with children and young people do not have enough information about the rights and entitlements of looked after children and care leavers. Only 18% of professionals who work specifically with children in care said that they had all the information they need.</p>	<p>Government should set realistic and manageable maximum caseloads for social workers and personal advisors to ensure that they have enough time to spend regular and quality time with the children and young people on their caseload. Young people who are care experienced should be involved in delivering training in every local authority that focuses on communication and relationships so that professionals understand how to communicate information about rights and entitlements.</p>	<p>Caseloads to continue to be monitored.</p>	<p>Head of Corporate Parenting</p>
<p>Some children and young people aren't getting their entitlements. Only 50% of care leavers said that they had a pathway plan. Some know about their entitlements but aren't getting them. 12% of young people knew that they should have a pathway plan, but said that they didn't.</p>	<p>Lead members should review annually with their Children in Care Council whether there is enough accessible and relevant information about their entitlements.</p>	<p>Entitlements to be recorded into Pathway Plans and Care Plans. This is to be monitored for evidence.</p>	<p>Head of Corporate Parenting</p>

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APPENDIX C

Tony Keaveney
Assistant Director
Housing Services

Afzal Ahmed
Team Manager – 13+ Transition & Leaving
Care



Suitable Accommodation for Looked After Children and Care Leavers



Publications

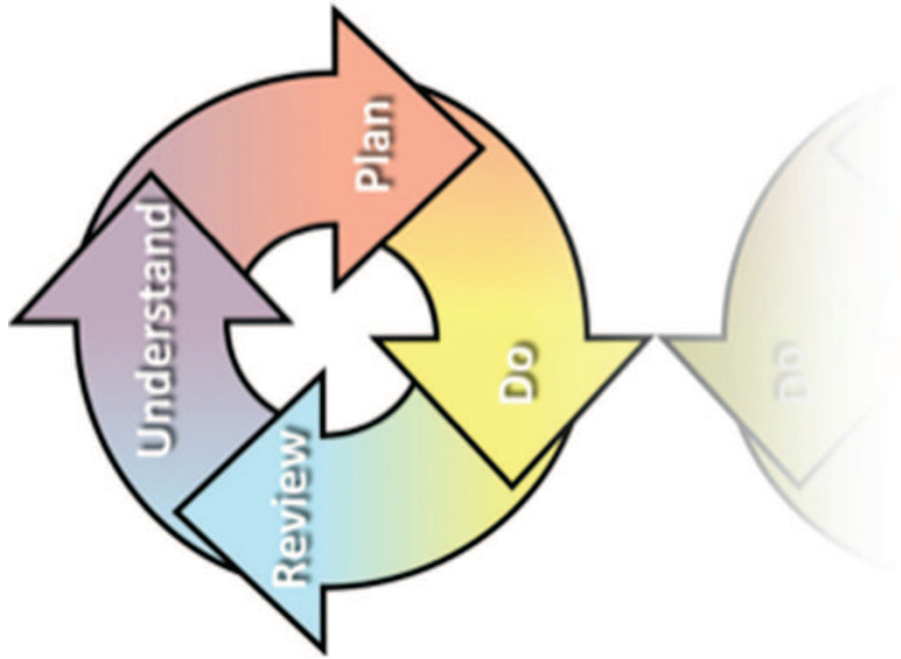


This statutory guidance provides clarification on the ‘sufficiency duty’ to secure sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of our looked after children. It is designed to guide us to:

- modify our commissioning practices to ensure we have sufficient local provision to meet the needs of our looked after children*
- ensure we have a strategic plan around commissioning placements for our looked-after children population.*

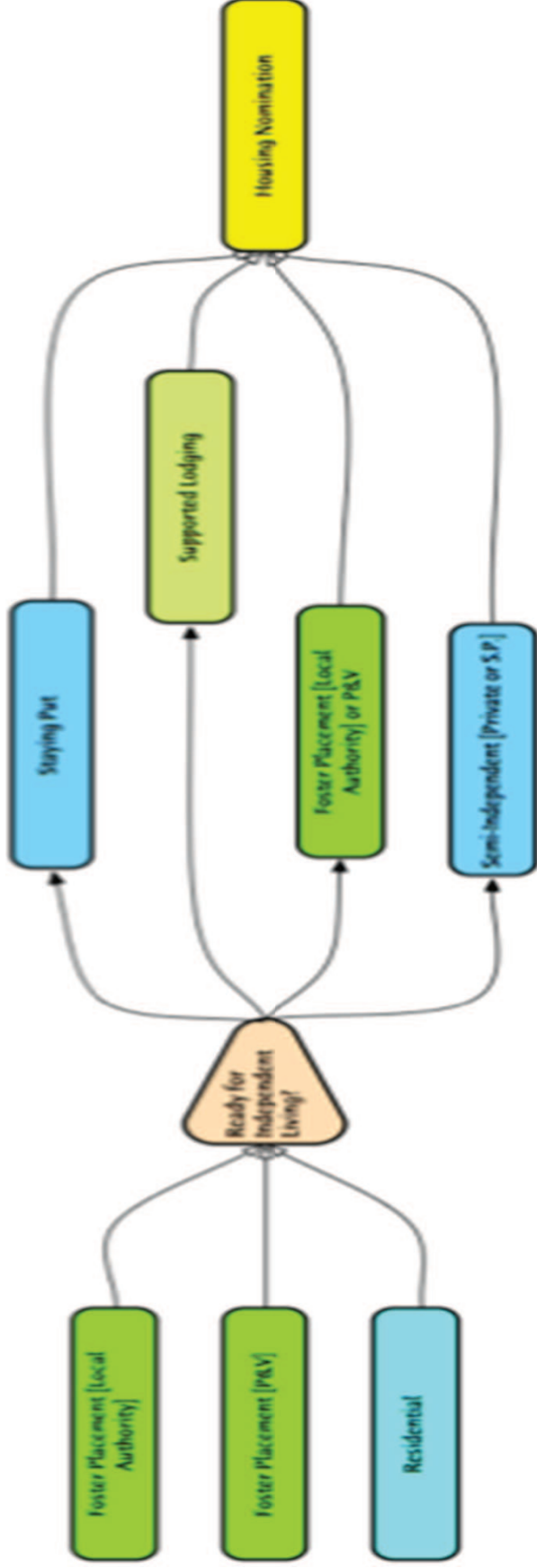


Analysing Needs & Gaps





Placement Pathways





Facts & Figures

- 85* looked after children [12-17]
- 40* young people aged 16-17
- 89 care leavers





Placement Destination for LAC 15-17 yr. olds*

Placement Type	15	16	17	Total
In-House FC	7	4	2	13
IFA	2	2	8	12
Children's Residential Home	3	4	3	10
Semi-Independent	0	2	8	10
Living with family	0	2	4	6
Missing	0	1	1	2
Total	12	15	26	53

* January 2014 [Does not include CWD - follow a different pathways]

What is suitable accommodation?

**Central
Bedfordshire**

Care leavers were asked in a recent survey 'what do you think is suitable accommodation' ?*

- ***Safe [34%]***
- ***Location/Area [12%]***
- ***Support [12%]***
- ***Good State of Repair [9%]***
- ***Affordable/Cost [5%]***

Current Supported Housing Provision for Young People

**Central
Bedfordshire**

Signposts , Based in Dunstable – 36 units (of which approx 18 for YP). Only available to YP in the “south”

MayDay Trust , Based in Leighton Buzzard – 40 units

Beds Housing Link – 18 units – mixed sex and age up to 65

Floating support services – Tenant Liaison Service and Bromford Support – 300 units but only a handful used by YP

Needs estimates – how many units of support needed at any one time?



Care Leavers – 21 units of Accommodation Based Support, and 36 units of floating support

Homeless 16 and 17 year olds – 22 units of Accommodation Based Support and 23 units of floating support

Gap for young people – 29 units Accommodation Based, and 61 units floating

Core Socially Excluded gap – 78 units of Accommodation Based and 211 units floating

Access to social housing tenancies-:



Around 1000 lets per annum, and anyone can joint the register at 16.

New allocation policy will introduce quotas for vulnerable groups – ring-fenced access to allocations.

Challenge will be provision of support to prevent tenancy failure and establish independent homes that feel safe and secure.

Market Position Statement

**Central
Bedfordshire**

This will articulate the requirement for Young People, based on the needs estimates, and seek progress towards that provision being available.

Revenue funding for support will be sticking point – may require disinvestment in existing services.

We can ring-fence access to existing floating services and put support in place up-front.

New possibilities –

Supported house shares – best use of stock

Key-ring schemes for people needing lower-level support.

What have we done?



- *Support for Success Panel.*
- *Increase setting up home allowance to £2,000.*
- *Development of Accredited Independent Life Skills Programme in Partnership with Youth Support Service.*
- *Develop further joint work with housing colleagues and independent providers*
- *Continue consultations with young people*

Support for Success Panel



- *Care Leavers & Looked After Children fulfill their potential into adulthood*
- *Meets Monthly*
- *Multi Agency – Key Partners*
- *Reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training.*

Next Phase 6 Months



Central
Bedfordshire

- *Framework for Private Providers by 1/4/14*
- *Joint Housing Nomination Protocol by 1/4/14*
- *Develop CBC Housing Pathways for Care Leavers that meet their needs by 30/6/14*
- *Multi-agency & multi-disciplinary group to coordinate work by 1/5/14*

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APPENDIX D

NHS
Bedfordshire
Clinical Commissioning Group



Looked After Children Health Update

January 2014

Catherine York
Designated Nurse for Looked After Children
Bedfordshire and Luton Clinical Commissioning Groups



Numbers of LAC

- March 2012 = 208
- March 2013 = 246
- January 2014 = 279

CBC Performance Team

Performance Data

	April – September 2013	April – December 2013
Review Health Assessments	89.9%	94.1 %
Dental Checks	92.9 %	94.1 %
SDQ	46.3 % of total cohort Average score = 14.7	74.2 % of total cohort Average score = 14.4
Immunisations	Now being recorded on CBC's IT system from the individual reports provided by SEPT, but not reported on the monthly performance report.	

Achievements

- SDQ Pathway developed and agreed
- External Review Action Plan developed and progressing
- LAC Health Strategy developed
- Audit of Health Assessment and pathway through to the subsequent Statutory Review
- Feedback from LAC and Foster Carers about their experience of their Health Assessments
- Briefing paper regarding LAC to all dentists and pharmacists in the BCCG area via Area Team
- Collection of LAC Health Data to be commenced – this will provide clear data of the identified health needs of CBC’s LAC

Leaving Care Health Service

- Looked After Young People's Nurse Referral Pathways (16 year+) developed and agreed
- Leaving Care update provided to the LAC Health Group in November 2013
- Health Passport to in area LAC only
- Letter including contact and drop-in clinic details to all Out of Area Care Leavers
- Weekly drop-in clinics which can also be accessed by Out of Area Care Leavers
- RHAs for identified young people
- Specific, time limited work with individual young people as per the pathway

Out of Area LAC and Young People

Key Deliverable in the Practice Development Board LAC Health Work stream:

“All LAC placed out of area will experience the same level of service for their Health Assessments as those LAC placed in area”

Challenges increased due to change of the service commissioned in line with Ofsted/CQC recommendations and Statutory Guidance

Out of Area LAC and Young People

Difficulties experienced:

- Issues of Quality and time delays
- External health providers prioritise their own LAC
- Several Local Health Providers no longer taking referrals for RHAs so these are now being referred to the child/young person's registered GP (Hertfordshire, Luton, Cambridgeshire and Milton Keynes)

Out of Area LAC and Young People

Actions taken to mitigate risks:

- SEPT to BCCG Escalation procedure which includes raising concerns/issues with local Designated Professionals. Enables collation of the data to provide an overview and identification of problem areas. Does not result in immediate resolution.
- BCCG's Director of Quality and Nursing wrote to her counterpart in Northampton re issues of quality for 11 RHAs, which resulted in immediate action and resolution
- Identified on LAC Health Group and BCCG Risk Registers
- BCCG raised issues with Area Team
- BCCG have established funding for a 1 year fixed term nursing post to undertake these RHAs; SEPT need to recruit to this post

Meeting: Corporate Parenting Panel
Date: 24 March 2014
Subject: Children in Care Council Annual Report for 2013
Report of: Cllr Mark Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services.
Summary: Attached at Appendix A is the Children in Care Council Annual Report for 2013 and Participation Forward Plan 2014. The Committee is asked to comment on the report.

Contact Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Children's Services
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The report supports Priority 2 of the Central Bedfordshire's Strategic Plan 2012-16: Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people. The report also supports 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 report.**

Appendices:

Appendix A – Children in Care Council and Participation 2013 Annual Report

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

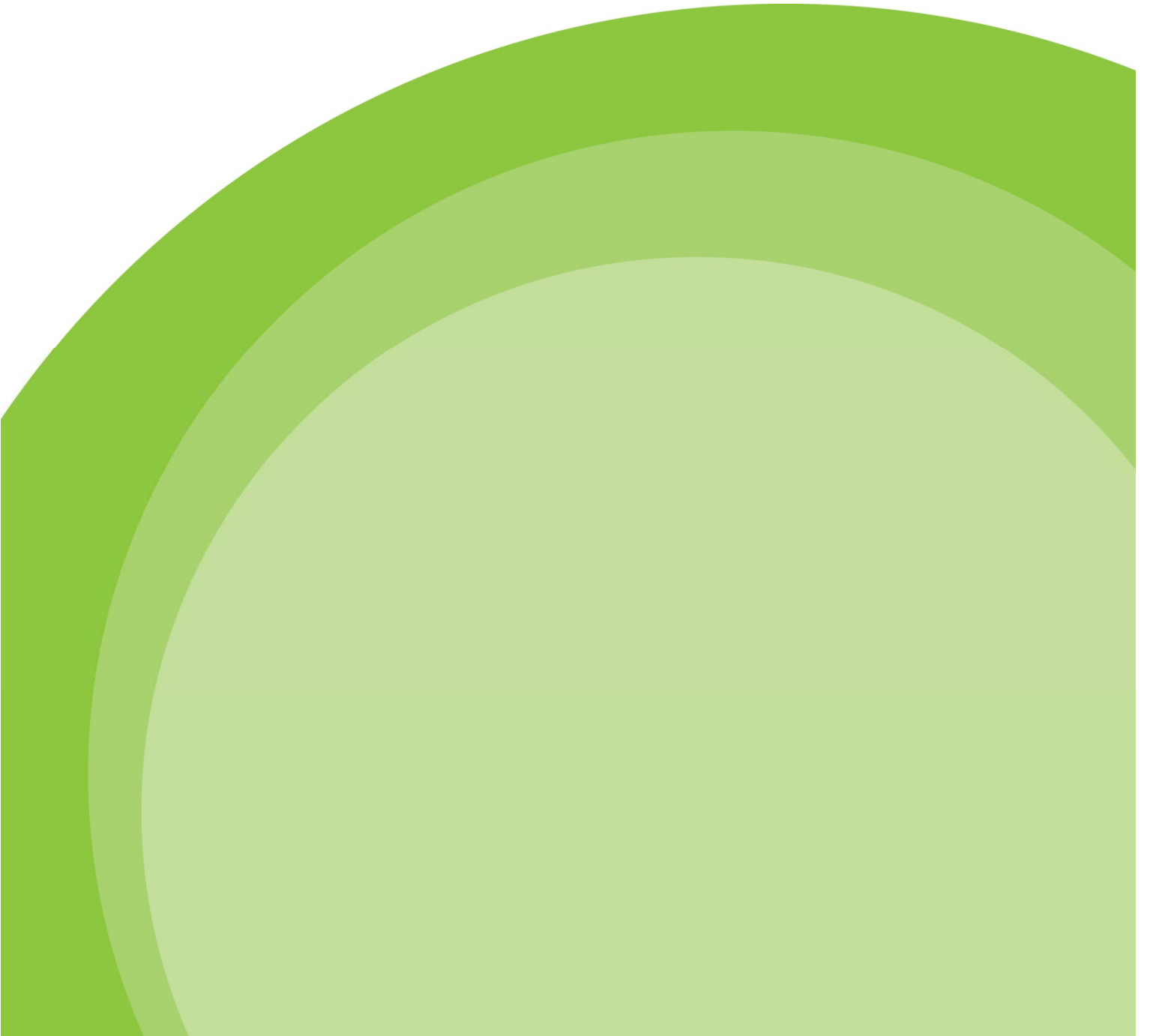
None

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Children in Care Council and Participation 2013

Annual Report



Children in Care Council and Participation 2013

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Aims and Objectives

The aim of the following report summarises and evaluates the agreed priorities of the CiCC and Participation over 2013 – 2014.

The CiCC produce a list of priorities which becomes their annual work plan. This report provides an overview of their work, its purpose and the outcomes of their commitment to achieving their priorities.

Children in Care Council Meetings

The CiCC have committed the last year to maintaining monthly meetings and have 17 active members in the 16 – 25 year olds group which includes Asylum seeking young people. The CiCC produce a list of priorities which becomes their annual work plan and their monthly meeting agenda focuses on their priorities. Each meeting is chaired by a CiCC member and this is alternated at each meeting. Agendas and minutes are recorded at each meeting and shared to update CiCC members on the actions from the previous meetings.

The priorities agreed are then carried out throughout the year and the CiCC are supported by the Participation Officer to assist their priorities to be achieved.

The CiCC peer mentors our younger group “Young Voices” which has averaged at 25 young people under the age of 16 to meet during school holidays and engage in participation activities. The “Young Voices” wishes and feelings are then contributed to the CiCC.

Four newsletters per year have been written by the CiCC. The newsletter contains information about events that have taken place, events that are coming up and encouraging young people to share their wishes and feelings by joining the CiCC.

The CiCC are committed to making positive change within Central Bedfordshire and also to build skills and qualifications for themselves. All members of the CiCC have created portfolios of their work to support with applying for employment, education and training. Members are also supported by the Participation Officers to develop curriculum vitae and gain accreditations for specific pieces of work.

Tasha who is a member of our CiCC reflected:

“In the first 3 months of being involved in the CiCC has helped me see things differently and also given me a chance to share my ideas and possibly make better change for children in care. Being a member of the CiCC has opened so many doors for me by doing things I’ve never done before!”

Links to Corporate Parenting

Members of the CiCC continue to attend Corporate Parenting Panel three times per year as agreed in the CiCC Priorities.

Young people attending panel averages at two CiCC members per panel this is largely due to educational and employment commitments. This year the CiCC presented their work about the Entitlements Inquiry to Corporate Parenting Panel. Work completed in Corporate Parenting Panel was included in the CiCC "Say it Loud!" newsletter (**see appendix 1**) which is sent to our looked after children and care leavers.

Discussions have taken place with how the CiCC can strengthen links with Corporate Parenting Panel and this is an area of focus for 2014 for the CiCC.

Members of the CiCC and Young Voices meet with the Chief Executive and the Director of Children's Services two times per year to discuss their work plans, what they are currently working on and their priorities for the following six months. The CiCC are encouraged to be honest in discussions about their experiences and empower the young people to share what changes need to happen. For example young people wanted more opportunities using leisure facilities and during the summer were given ten free swimming tokens and a football coach programme which ran over the summer holidays.

CiCC meet with the Assistant director three times per year to discuss their priorities and forthcoming work plan. They also have additional opportunities to meet more frequently during corporate events, interviews and participation activities.

Head of Corporate Parenting regularly meets with the CiCC to discuss service developments. For example, consultation work took place regarding the remodeling of the looked after children's team.

Daytona who is a CiCC member said:

"I think it is very good that senior member of staffs take such an interest to young people and the work we have to offer to the service as they don't have to take an interest! They don't have to be involved but they choose to and because of that young people across central Bedfordshire feel more valued."

Consultation Events

Looked after Children and Young People leaving care are represented at regional and national levels through CiCC events and national surveys such as the "Children's Rights" and "All Party Parliamentary Group".

A number of Central Bedfordshire specific consultations have also taken place this year. These consultations focused on issues such as education, health and service feedback. The purpose of these consultations is to obtain the

wishes and feelings of young people and to incorporate this into service improvements.

An example of this is signing the Department for Education Charter for Care Leavers. This Charter is a promise from Central Bedfordshire to support them with things such as:

“We will hold a belief in your potential and a vision for your future even if you have lost sight of these yourself.”

“We will value your strengths, gifts and talents and encourage your aspirations.”

To support our Pledge: *“we will offer you opportunities to take part in activities to help to stay fit and healthy”* consultations have taken place with both our Health and Leisure departments. During the summer holidays young people were given free swimming passes for individuals and foster families. A football coaching programme was also available for Looked after Children and Care Leavers.

Work with our Health and Leisure departments is ongoing and further developments are in progress for 2014 with regards to more sporting opportunities and experiences for Looked after Children and Care Leavers.

Annual Awards Evening

The Annual Awards evening is the opportunity to celebrate with our Looked after Children and Care Leavers and their achievements over the past year.

200 nominations were received this year from a range of professionals which is our highest amount to date. The CiCC planned the Awards Event and were responsible for decorations, entertainment, refreshments and designing the invitations and certificates. CiCC members opened the evening and performed a fitting song on an acoustic guitar.

Our Assistant Director compered the Awards evening and Executive Member for Children’s Services presented the awards to each young person.

The Chairman of the Council addressed the event speaking to the children, young people and adults about their achievements and her pride in being part of the occasion.

All young people who were nominated received a voucher and a certificate. The Council Chambers was decorated to promote the work of the CiCC and there was also an opportunity to complete our “Say it Loud” survey and share what each individual was most proud of during that year.

Some examples are:

“I haven’t ran away for 4 months and have attended school for 5 weeks without a day off.” Louise

***Going to a Michael Jackson tribute night and going horse riding.”
Nathan***

***“Changing school and making new friends and also getting up when I
don’t always get things right” Hannah***

Entertainment was also provided at the event by a Magician, Circus Skills Workshop, DJ, a Paper Plane Contest, Face Painting and Glitter Tattoos organised by staff and managers within Children’s Services.

Feedback from the awards has been very positive from young people and professionals and was featured in “Staff Central”. **(See appendix 2)**

Activity Based Participation and Activities Programme

Activities are provided during school holidays for our Looked after Children and Care Leavers. These events provide opportunity for young people to socialize with others in care and offer peer support through our peer mentors. The purpose of these activities are to provide new experiences and to create an creative opportunity for young people to express their views about decisions made that affect them, learning about their rights, and helping to inform them about their future as well as having fun.

During the summer holidays 8 participation activities were held which included Outdoor Activities, Swimming, Falconry Experience and Ice Skating. There were around 30 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.

The University of Bedfordshire organised a day for Looked after Children between the ages of 8 – 12 years old called “Sowing Seeds”. The aim of the day is to provide a taster session for children and gain early interest and awareness for possibilities of attending University. Sowing seeds is a workshop designed for children to promote awareness for going to University and raising their educational aspirations.

“Just thought you would like to know that I saw the W siblings last week and they all told me how much fun they had on the activities. D in particular loved the ice skating and it's all she wanted to tell me about! All she talked about was the CiCC and told me all about what they did on the activity day a while ago. Just wanted to tell you this as being part of the group has really benefitted D!” Sarah Harper Social worker

Residential Trips

The purpose of residential trips is to provide children and young people experiences that will increase their confidence, help develop a new level of independence and develop their skills and knowledge beyond their normal day to day living.

There were two residential trip opportunities for Looked after Children and Care Leavers this year.

The University of Bedfordshire organised a two nights, three days trip for Young People in years 10 and 11. The purpose of the residential was for Young People to have the opportunity to discuss and explore their educational options, learn revision techniques and receive career advice.

There were five Central Bedfordshire Looked after Children who attended with support from the Participation Officer. All young people who attended have completed their GCSE and 4 are in further education and 1 has started a apprenticeship through Central Bedfordshire Council.

The Youth Support team worked alongside the Participation Officers and organized a residential trip with members of the CiCC and Youth Parliament. The objective of the residential was to strengthen the links between the CiCC and Youth Parliament and planning future combined work.

Feedback from young people who attend residential has consistently been positive. Young people have requested residential opportunities to continue and have residential trips as a means to consult with young people and support them with developing social, emotional and independent skills.

“I felt about 4/10 this morning because I was nervous and am not very confident. Now I am 7/10 because I’ve got to know people from team building games. I want to learn more about independent skills and see what it’s like to live on my own.” William

Recruitment and Training of Social Worker and Foster Carers

The objective of the CiCC is to be involved in training and recruitment is to establish a clear message that Central Bedfordshire demonstrates child centered practice. As looked after children and care leavers the CiCC provides specialist insight to what young people consider to be the vital skills to have the best professional working with young people.

The CiCC have worked closely with the Learning and Development manager and have created their own training programme which was delivered to the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) employees. Feedback provided by the attendees was very positive as they felt training by young people who have social workers was invaluable.

Members of the CiCC have been working with the University of Bedfordshire to provide workshops to undergraduate and post graduate students. This workshop focuses on reflective work around the positive qualities of a social worker.

The CiCC also deliver training to foster carers where they make 3D houses and identify *“As a Foster Carer, what will you provide to children that come into your care?”* The CiCC then ask the Foster Carers *“What do you think are some of the barriers for children in your care and how will you overcome them?”* Members of the CiCC also attended the information evenings for Foster Carers and presented information to people who were interested in becoming a Foster Carers.

Head of Corporate Parenting, Social Worker, Personal Advisor and Social Work Students on the Step Up programme have also been interviewed by the CiCC. These interviewing panels have been conducted in an assortment of ways which included: role play, set panel questions, group activities and joint panels.

Fun Day/ Charity Events/ Consultation Day

During the Christmas holidays the CiCC arranged a ‘winter wonderland’ themed event for all young people aged 16 years and older which was attended by 28 young people, staff from the looked after, leaving care and Asylum service as well as Edwina Grant and Gerard Jones. **(See appendix 3)**

The CiCC have been involved in two charity events during 2013. A Cake Sale was held and £80 was raised for Comic Relief.

Christmas Cards were designed by our Looked after Children and Care Leavers and sold to staff raising £375 for Keech Cottage.

Participation Work Plan

The Participation Officers have continued to work towards the Work Plan that was agreed.

In September 2012 a secondment opportunity for an additional full time Participation Officer was agreed and appointed. This contract has been extended until 1st May 2014 when the substantive post holder returns from maternity leave.

Participation Officers continue to promote participation to the Social Work Teams, attending Team Meetings to promote the work of the CiCC and wider participation.

Conclusion

Over the past year the CiCC have continued to meet on a regular basis and made significant efforts to promote and raise awareness of their work through mediums such as their "Say it Loud" newsletter and attending national and regional events.

The CiCC have maintained strong links with their Corporate Parents and have had opportunities throughout the year to discuss their priorities and evidence how they have worked in achieving these. The CiCC would like to explore strengthening their relationships with Councillors and inviting them to attend CiCC events, meeting others in care and establishing a more creative way to interact with their corporate children and young people.

There have been a number of consultation events with a variety of ages over the past year. The CiCC will explore ways to encourage a higher number of young people to feedback their wishes and feelings to increase representation.

The summer activities programme continues to be a successful way for our young people to have enrichment experiences, peer support and mentor each other. The participation officers also support the summer activities programme to engage with a large group of young people and have this opportunity to consult with them and discuss their rights.

The CiCC have been involved with interviewing and providing training and have worked closely with the Learning and Development manager. The CiCC continue to evaluate how they can improve the training they provide and how this can be developed for 2014/15. Due to the changes in Foster and Adoption service the foster carer information evening will no longer take place and the CiCC have been asked to attend additional training sessions provided for foster carers.

The CiCC continue to discuss innovative ways they can promote their work, raise awareness and encourage more young people to become part of the CiCC. More exploration into this will take place in 2014/15 regarding events and multi agency awareness.

Forward Plan

(See appendix 4 - attached)

Please find attached appendix 1, 2 and 3.

Say It Loud!

Activities

There has been loads of activities which lots of young people have been taking part in. Over the summer we had days including swimming, assault courses, canoeing, Thorpe park just to name a few! The activities are a great way to meet other people in care and make friends.



Awards



Thank you to everyone who came to the awards evening in October!

Children and young people who are in care or are care leavers celebrated their 'Annual Achievement Awards' on Friday the 4th October.



The ceremony took place at Central Bedfordshire's Council Chambers at Chicksands in Bedfordshire where Central Bedfordshire's Children in Care Council organised the event and decided on food options, entertainment, venue decorations, designing the invites and certificates; whilst also being consulted on the agenda for the evening.



"It was really special this year, and this made the Awards extra special. We would not have pulled off such an amazing night if it weren't for the hard work of the members of the CICC. I personally would not change anything, as it has been the best Awards by far. I believe that you should be able to celebrate your achievements with everyone!"



By Charlotte



Sahra won an outstanding achievement award for making amazing efforts with her college studies!



Appendix 1a

Looked after children and care leavers Entitlements Inquiry

During the summer some of us were asked what we knew about our entitlements as looked after children and care leavers. We spoke about having care plans, lac reviews, and visits from our social workers.

The CiCC attended a meeting at the House of Commons to discuss the Entitlements Inquiry's and how young people can be helped with knowing what their entitlements are. Lots of important people were at the House of Commons and the MP for Children and Families, Edward Timpson was there and we asked him questions.

"My own experiences are what gave me the courage to speak up to make a difference for other young people. I asked about the leaving care grants and when they should be allowed to be used. Edward Timpson took on board my views and addressed the issues and said in the near future he plans to make a change. We need more chances to speak up and voice our views to our MP's to make sure our voices are heard."
Rebeka

Youth Parliament

Youth Parliament is young people working together to make positive changes within Central Bedfordshire. Youth Parliament meets on a regular bases to discuss, debate, action plan and work towards their priorities.

Elections to Youth Parliament are taking place in January 2014. If you want to know more about Youth Parliament, be part of influencing change, meet new friends or put your views across then Youth Parliament maybe for you.

If you want to make a difference and be a part of youth parliament then contact Claire Seamarks with your details.

"Walking in a Winter Wonderland..."



The CiCC are in the process of organising a Winter Wonderland celebration in December for our 16+ young people and care leavers.

"The winter wonderland party is going to be awesome. There will be food, games, music and loads of fun. It's a great opportunity to meet new people!" Tasha

Social workers will be inviting our looked after young people aged 16 and above to attend the event. There will be a sit down meal for all young people, games, gifts and entertainment.

We are hoping for a large turn out of our young people. If your young person would like to attend and they are 16 years or over please let your social worker know.



If you would like to join CiCC or want to know more about the things going on it would be great to hear from you!

Please send Claire Seamarks an email with any questions or comments to Claire.seamarks@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



Appendix 2

We've gone pink to support
Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Staff Central

For your latest news and information

**Central
Bedfordshire**



Sahra (second left), receives her Outstanding Achievement award at the recent celebration at Priory House

Celebrating looked after children

Our annual celebration of Central Bedfordshire's looked after children and care leavers took place recently, recognising personal achievements that range from educational successes to demonstrations of courage and resilience.

There were more than 200 nominees for this year's awards, which were organised by our Children in Care Council and held at Priory House.

Everyone who was nominated received a certificate, and special awards were handed out including an 'Outstanding Achievement' award that went to Sahra, a refugee, originally from Eritrea, who has been living in the UK for less than two years. Sahra was praised for the great progress she has made in her studies since starting her college course in Health and Social Care.

Claire Seamarks, Participation Officer, was involved in organising the awards and said: "This annual event shows our pride in these inspirational young people, but also reflects the great support they receive from our carers, social workers and other council staff, which enables them to have a successful and healthy life once they leave our care."

22 October 2013

Also in this issue:

- [Make One Change](#)
- [Caddington Ward update](#)
- [Christmas working/pay details](#)
- [The Central Beds Tache Squad](#)
- [Legal team makes first move](#)
- [Modelling opportunity](#)
- [Wear It Pink / Big Pink Quiz](#)
- [Final squad members needed!](#)
- [Be physically and financially fitter for the festive season](#)
- [Clocks go back this weekend](#)



As a council, we aim to encourage greater independence and self-reliance amongst our residents, but Richard considers how successful he has been at putting this theory into practice with his own family.



Find out about the latest ILM Leadership and Management Award Level 5 opportunity on [page 7](#).

Planned system outage

As part of the ongoing efforts to resolve the problems with our computer systems, Information Assets will be running tests on Tuesday, 22 October from 7.00pm to 9.00pm – during this time our computer systems and website will largely be unavailable.

Please remember to report new incidents, and add additional detail to existing open incidents, using the [IA Service Desk Portal](#).

Appendix 3

**Wonderful Winter
Wonderland event**

Just before Christmas, staff from our Children's Services Directorate held a 'Winter Wonderland'-themed event, giving looked after children, care leavers and young people seeking asylum, a chance to enjoy a very special festive celebration.

The event for 16-21 year olds, which Edwina Grant, Director of Children's Services, and Gerard Jones, Assistant Director Children's Services Operations, both attended, was packed full of festive fun.

It included a buffet of international cuisine prepared by the management team, a disco, a quiz, a giant pass-the-parcel, staff singing carols and visits from Santa and a panda, which was actually Edward Wong in disguise!



(Left to right); Mark Ciuro, Deputy Team Manager - 13+ Transition and Leaving Care Team, Edward Wong, Head of Corporate Parenting, and Gerard Jones, Assistant Director Children's Services Operations



Edwina Grant, Director of Children's Services, with a young party-goer

Edward, who has recently been appointed to the post of Head of Corporate Parenting, explained: "Christmas can be an emotional time of year for young people who live away from their family. Within Children's Services, staff across a range of teams play an important part in our role as a 'Corporate Parent'.

"As part of fulfilling our role, we wanted to ensure that these young people had the same opportunity for some festive fun and happy Christmas memories as others of a similar age. The event was a real success and I'd like to thank everyone who helped make it possible."

In related news, our Children in Care Council (CICC) raised money for a children's charity by asking looked after children and care leavers to design some impressive Christmas cards. The cards were sold to council staff and helped raise £300, which the council's Conference and Review team donated a further £75 to. All the proceeds have gone to Keech Cottage – a local hospice for children, young people and adults diagnosed with life-limiting conditions.

Information Assets maintenance weekend: 25-26 January

Thank you to everyone who provided feedback on Information Assets' (IA's) proposed plans for regular service downtime, which would enable the team to carry out essential maintenance on a more planned basis.

IA would like to confirm that the first maintenance weekend will take place from Saturday, 25 to Sunday, 26 January – the main area that will be affected this month will be the Blue Network.

Maintenance weekends will continue to take place on the fourth weekend of every month, which are likely to affect different systems and different groups of staff. The level of disruption will vary according to the work taking place.

These maintenance weekends will enable the IA team to take a more controlled approach to out-of-hours work and service outages. However, staff are advised that ad-hoc service downtime, outside of these planned maintenance weekends, may still be required.

Priorities	Action	Timescales	Accountability	Outcomes
Support CiCC with achieving priorities for 2014.	Continue to work through agreed priorities plan.	Ongoing throughout 2014	CiCC and Participation Officers	Young people to have a voice in relation to the planning and delivery of services they receive. Feedback will influence and improve services to LAC & LAAC To develop a sense a belonging and shared identity with others who have similar experiences. To increase their confidence & raise self esteem and establish transferable and valuable life skills Be part of the planning and operational process. To engage with officers and elected members within CBC.
Children with Disabilities. Increase involvement and engagement.	Liaise with CWD Head of Service.	Initial strategy completed by the end of April 2014	CWD Head of Service and Participation Officers	Children with disabilities will be represented within the CiCC and strategies will be established where their wishes and feelings will be incorporated into service developments.
Encourage more engagement from looked after children and care leavers in participation activities.	Improve relationships with social workers, foster carers and personal advisors in promoting participation	February (half term) April (Easter holidays) August (Summer holidays) October (Half term)	Participation Officers, Team managers for looked after children and leaving care, Social workers, Personal Advisors &	The numbers of young people engaging in participation activities will be over 10% of the population of looked after children and care leavers. Young people will benefit from peer support, positive interactions with other young people who are in care and this will be recorded in case notes and statutory visits.

	events and staff engagement.	December (Winter holidays)	Foster Carers	
Establish consultation work with a more representative cohort of young people including out of county.	CBC specific surveys developed for social workers and Personals advisors to incorporate into their statutory visits.	July 2014	Participation Officers, Social Workers, Personal Advisors	CBC to have specific feedback about the quality of service young people are receiving and use this information to make positive change.
Further develop relationships with members of Corporate Parenting Panel and the CiCC.	CiCC to research into how other local authorities engage with their councillors and develop a strategy of how the CiCC, looked after children and care leavers will engage with councillors.	Ongoing throughout 2014.	Participation Officers, CiCC and Councillors	CiCC, looked after children and care leavers will have greater opportunities to meet with councillors and discuss their experiences of care and contribute to service developments. Councillors having more involvement with a wider cohort of young people looked after and care leavers to strengthen links and raise awareness of the importance of having meaningful relationships as corporate parents.

Meeting: Corporate Parenting Panel

Date: 24 March 2014

Subject: 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 impact of the steps taken since September 2013 to develop the role of the Virtual School in order to improve outcomes for Looked After Children and young people.

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

Contact Officer: Jackie Edwards Interim Virtual School Head Teacher

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. The lead of the Virtual School will become a statutory post when the current Children and Families Bill receives Royal assent (advised by DfE to be June 2014).
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, the progress made to date, and comments on the actions identified and being implemented within the revised Development Plan (attached as Appendix A) to improve outcomes for Looked After Children.

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, monitor and challenge 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 the right resources and interventions;
 - (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 report includes the validated educational outcomes for Looked After Children for the academic year 2012/13 (attached as Appendix B), as well as the impact of actions identified to improve outcomes for Looked After Children. Comparative data on outcomes is restricted and so not available due to small numbers. However it is evident that Central Bedfordshire Looked After Children have not made appropriate progress, and the gap between them and other pupils is too wide. Therefore a range of actions have been identified to ensure that every looked after child makes the most progress possible.

Background

8. The Virtual School 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. At March 2014 the total number of Central Bedfordshire pupils of statutory school age who are part of the Virtual School is 171 (Reception to Year 11). This does not include 15 Y12 and Y13 students who attend school/college who choose to continue with the PEP and are supported by the Virtual School. A further 40 Y12/13 students choose not to engage in the PEP process as is their right.
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 records children's' previous educational experiences and attainment as well as setting targets for future achievement. The nominated social worker and the designated teacher are responsible for instigating the writing of the PEP. Completed PEPs are held by the Virtual School. Currently PEPs are taking place termly where appropriate to enable the Virtual School to closely monitor academic progress so that support and challenge can be offered regarding pupils making expected or better than expected progress. There is a quality assurance checklist for all new PEPs which helps ensure that they are of a consistently high standard.
10. After consultation with schools and other services it was agreed that the PEP would be revised and piloted in the summer term 2014 with the launch of a new rolling PEP from September 2014. This will align closely with the system and information collected in Framework I. The Virtual School Educational Advisers are now taking a more proactive role in managing this new documentation to bring about more rigour and consistency to the process.
11. In April 2011 the Government introduced the Pupil Premium. The amount will increase in April 2014 to £1900. 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. Advice has been reinforced to schools through a number of means. Currently case studies are being collected on the effective use of the pupil premium on accelerating pupil progress.

12. In October 2013 an interim head of the Virtual School was appointed to drive an improvement in the attainment of looked after children in Central Bedfordshire. This includes working closely with schools and social care to identify and intervene with those who are at risk of disengagement or under achievement. This role will be permanently appointed to in September 2014.

Exclusions

13.

	Days lost to Fixed Term Exclusions (FTE)	Number of pupils	Permanent Exclusions (PE)
2011/2012	141.5	20	1
2012/2013	132	18	1
2013/2014	Autumn: 62 days Spring: 9.5	17	1

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 are being addressed as a priority in this academic year as every day of education lost to fixed term exclusion will impact negatively on outcomes.

The reduction of Fixed Term Exclusions is as result of the Virtual School working pro-actively with schools and other services to prevent exclusions as set out below.

The Virtual School is immediately informed by the Exclusions Officer when an exclusion of a LAC occurs. The school are immediately contacted by the Education Adviser to discuss day 1 provision and plan a re-integration meeting to prevent repeat exclusions. Days lost to FTE have reduced significantly since the new approach has been taken. 5 pupils have only been excluded once. Three pupils contributed 30 days to the Autumn term total, but 2 are now attending the Academy of Central Bedfordshire (ACB) and the other is currently accessing 3 days Alternative Provision in Hertfordshire, with a plan to increase to full time provision if appropriate by March.

There has been one permanent exclusion (PE) of a pupil who at the time was looked after. However the pupil ceased to be LAC and the Virtual School were no longer in a position to challenge the school on this ground. This pupil is still being closely monitored by social care.

Another pupil in a school in a neighbouring Local Authority was excluded and despite the school being willing to withdraw the PE this was not supported by that LA's policy on exclusion. The Virtual School are working closely with the social care team, the carer and the identified provision to support the pupil prior to transfer to a new school in September.

Attendance

14. The table below demonstrates the overall improvement in attendance in each year group. It should be noted that small numbers do affect the percentage figures.

Year Group	No. of pupils	CBC LAC	No. of pupils	CBC LAC	National All Pupils 2011-12
		Aut 2013		Aut 2012	
1	15	97%	11	96%	94%
2	17	94%	5	98%	96%
3	13	97%	10	94%	96%
4	12	99%	9	98%	96%
5	18	97%	7	98%	96%
6	7	99%	9	95%	96%
7	16	96%	11	92%	95%
8	11	94%	12	94%	95%
9	15	85%	10	82%	94%
10	17	88%	12	79%	94%
11	15	83%	22	73%	93%
Total	156*	94%	118	91%	95%

15. Through Welfare Call The Virtual School now receives daily updates as to the attendance of pupils and on the first day of absence they contact the carer. Any prolonged absence (more than 3 days) is followed up by the Education Adviser in discussion with the Social Worker. If there is no acceptable reason for absence a multi-professional meeting is called.

The Virtual School is now able to generate attendance data which can be regularly interrogated and shared, and appropriate actions identified immediately to support pupils' improved attendance. All pupils where attendance has been identified as a concern are being closely monitored by both the Virtual School and Social Care.

Autumn term 2013 overall attendance for looked after children in Central Bedfordshire was 93.25%

70% (122) of pupils attending 95% and above (47 pupils attending 100%)

13 % (22) pupils attending between 90% and 94.9%

3% (6) pupils attending between 85% and 89.9%

14% absence below 85% including 4% (7 pupils) attending below 50%.

The 7 pupils attending below 50% are all being closely monitored and all have multi-professional support to re-engage them in their education.

16. If appropriate a part-time timetable may be agreed if it is in the best interest of the child. However it is closely monitored by the Virtual School and only seen as a short term arrangement.

17. 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. There have been 2 Year 11 pupils moved to date this year.
18. The Virtual School works in partnership with social care colleagues to commission care placements which can maintain school placements whenever possible.

Pupils' Achievement

19. Validated pupil outcomes are as reported in November 2013, and are attached as Appendix B.
20. Progress and achievement data is collected using the PEP process on a termly basis. The Virtual School now analyses the data and works with schools to identify appropriate next steps. Designated Teachers track progress from the end of each Key Stage and 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. The Virtual School provides challenge where pupils are not making at least expected progress. Where required other agencies are supporting intervention for these pupils.

Progress of pupils in 2013/2014

21. There are currently 16 pupils in the Year 2 cohort who will reach the end of KS1 this academic year. 10 out of the 12 pupils without identified SEN are on track to achieve at least age expected levels of attainment. 3 pupils with statements are making expected progress. 1 pupil with significant issues is now in a settled foster placement, and a place at a special school has been identified. This stability will support him in making expected progress.
23. There are currently 8 pupils in the Year 6 cohort who will reach the end of KS2 this academic year. 4 out of 5 pupils without an identified SEN are on track to achieve at least at age expected levels. 1 pupil is expected to achieve at least 1 level more than expected levels. The 2 pupils with statements of SEN are on track to make at least 2 levels of progress.

24. There are currently 14 pupils in the Year 11 cohort who are reaching the end of KS4 at the end of the academic year.

4 pupils (28%) are on track to achieve 5A* - Cs including English and Maths. 1 is currently settling with a new carer and accessing 1 to 1 home tuition to support progress.

3 pupils (21%) are on track to achieve 3 GCSEs not including English and maths. One pupil has recently moved to a Children's Home and attainment will depend upon this placement remaining stable. 1 pupil has recently been referred to the Academy of Central Bedfordshire (ACB) where support will be provided to access appropriate qualifications.

1 pupil (7%) is on track to achieve a level 2 in Sports Science and functional skills level 1 in English and maths

4 have statements (28%) and all are on track to make expected progress including vocational qualifications and level 2 functional skills (1 is expected to achieve 3GCSEs)

All those with statements are being closely monitored by Youth Support Services as well as SEN Services, and where appropriate application are being made for top up High Needs funding to support College places in September.

2 (14%) are not on track to achieve formal accreditation. One is a school refuser and the other is in a residential home in Liverpool. In both instances social care, the Virtual School and Youth Support Services are working collaboratively to make sure that the pupils have a positive post-16 pathway plan.

Social Care, the Virtual School and Youth Support are meeting monthly to track the progress of all Year 11 pupils. All Year 11 pupils have had PEP reviews this term and where possible the Senior Youth Support Officer has attended.

Progress against Priority Actions for 2013/14

25. In order to improve the outcomes for Looked After Children the priorities of the Virtual School have been jointly identified with the Head of Service for Looked After Children and set out within a Virtual School Improvement Plan which has been agreed with the Governing Body and the Practice Development Board, and focuses on a range of key priorities. Progress made against these actions is set out below.

26. 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.

Update March 2014. The Virtual School receives data daily. First day absence is followed up with carers, continuous absence of 3 days or more is followed by the Education Adviser and/or the Social Worker. The Virtual School have worked directly with schools to arrange 1 to 1 tuition and/or quality assured alternative provision for those pupils most at risk of a permanent exclusion. Currently 4 permanent exclusions have been prevented through this work. There is improved discussion between the Virtual School and Social Care staff regarding the availability of appropriate educational provision if a child moves foster placement. Where appropriate transfer PEP meetings take place (involving both schools) when it is essential that a child moves schools for safeguarding reasons or a necessary change of foster placement.

27. Ensuring that Looked After Children are placed promptly in schools when moving council areas.

Update March 2014 The Virtual School now works closely with Social Care staff, supporting carers and social workers in identifying new schools where appropriate and supporting transfer between schools by carrying out PEP meetings with both old and new schools.

28. 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.

Update March 2014 Where appropriate PEP reviews are now taking place termly to monitor academic progress and effective use of the pupil premium. Training has taken place raising awareness of expected pupil progress with the LAC Social Care team. The need to accelerate pupil progress was highlighted and prioritised with designated teachers at the recent network meeting. The Chair of the Governing Body has shared good practice with schools on demonstrating impact of the use of Pupil premium through the Headteacher and Governors briefings.

29. 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.

Update March 2014 Developing the PEPS in consultation with all stakeholders to link directly with Framework I. Designated teacher network meetings are taking place regularly.

30. 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.

Update March 2014 The priority since October has been on monitoring Y11 pupils to support them to achieve at least in line with their peers where appropriate. Where pupils are disengaged or have significant issues links have been made with Youth Support Services to develop pathways to post-16 education, training or employment. The Virtual School currently has data on pupil progress against age related expectations and are in the process of collating accurate baseline data.

31. Ensuring robust monitoring and tracking of all 16-21 (or 25) 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.

Update March 2014 This continues to be a key area for development as post-16 students may choose not to continue with PEPs. The Virtual School has made links with the Youth Support Services in relation to Y11 pupils most at risk of becoming NEET.

32. Embedding the role of the governing body, providing appropriate levels of challenge and support.

Update March 2014 2 Governing Body meetings have taken place in October 2013 and January 2014 both well attended including school, social care, health, foster carer and Councillor representation. The Governing Body are now monitoring progress of the Virtual School against the school development plan.

33. **Next steps**

Further priority actions will be identified as the Virtual School role develops and in the light of the Children and Families Act.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Virtual School Development Plan 2013-2015

Appendix B – LAC Validated Outcomes 2013

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

None

Overall Aim:

Through shared responsibility, accountability and effective communication among services LAC make expected progress both in their academic achievement and personal development

Objectives	Strategies	Lead Person	Timescales	Outcomes	Update January 2014
<p>1 All pupils attend in line with their peers</p> <p>(Links to KD 2 Practice Development Board)</p>	<p>i. The contract with Welfare Call is renewed</p> <p>ii. Data is shared with identified personnel and agreed actions are taken when LAC attendance drops below 95% including multi professional meetings.</p> <p>iii. Actions are monitored by lead officers</p> <p>iv. Social Workers will share current attendance information at every LAC Health review</p> <p>v. Virtual School staff will be informed of any CAMHS referral and remain involved in any multi agency meetings to ensure that all pupils access full time appropriate education</p> <p>vi. The Virtual School will provide case studies of examples of best practice</p>	<p>JE/EW</p> <p>LAC Team</p> <p>Schools and settings</p>	<p>October 2013</p>	<p>Overall LAC attendance is in line with national averages.</p> <p>KS 4 attendance improves by 5%</p> <p>10% reduction in the number of LAC who are persistently absent</p> <p>Alternative/personalised curriculums in place for the most disengaged</p>	<p>Autumn term 2013 - 174 pupils of schools age</p> <p>70% of pupils attending 95% and above (26% 100%)</p> <p>16% attending between 85% and 94.9%</p> <p>14% persistently absence</p> <p>4% attending below 50%</p> <p>Education Advisers follow up all absences more than 3 days.</p> <p>The 7 pupils attending below 50% all have a multi-professional approach to re-engage them in their education</p>

<p>2 The number of days lost to fixed term exclusions continues to fall</p> <p>Links to KD 6 Practice Development Board)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Schools and settings are supported to reduce the need to exclude through effective intervention from a range of agencies to improve personal development and engagement in learning ii. Alternative packages are identified for those LAC most at risk of exclusion including a personalised curriculum. iii. Schools, supported by the Virtual School (VS), identify a directory of quality assured alternative providers iv. Schools and the VS identify a database of quality assured personal tutors for one to one tuition 	<p>Schools/ Settings</p>	<p>March 2014</p>	<p>There is a 10% reduction in the number of days lost to fixed term exclusion</p> <p>There are no permanent exclusions</p>	<p>There has been 1 PE of a LAC – the school refused to withdraw the exclusion and the young person is no longer looked after.</p> <p>Another pupil in a Bedford Borough School was excluded and despite the school being willing to withdraw the PE this was not supported by the LA's policy on exclusion.</p> <p>17 pupils have had at least 1 FTE leading to 83.5 days lost.</p> <p>3 pupils contributed 30 days to this total two are now attending the ACB and the other is accessing 3 days AP in Stevenage.</p>
<p>3 Pupils are set challenging targets to accelerate academic progress to close the gap between LAC and their peers</p> <p>Links to KD 4 Practice Development Board)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v. A database is developed that aligns with the Tribal database. vi. Progress data is routinely collected during PEP meetings vii. Data is transferred from PEPs to the LAC database viii. Early intervention is identified when progress slows ix. The VS will produce a 	<p>JE/PJ/ LAC team</p>	<p>January 2014</p>	<p>Pupil progress is closely tracked and recorded.</p> <p>Where possible pupils achieve in line with FFT</p> <p>Number of LACs who become NEET is reduced by 10%</p> <p>No Y11s leave school with no qualifications</p>	<p>The process is now in place to collect and collate data but as yet this is not completed. We do monitor individual pupil progress through LAC and offer challenge to schools where pupils are under achieving.</p> <p>VS head attending carer's meetings advising on pupil progress and offering</p>

	leaflet explaining progress data and what that means to be shared with other agencies and foster carers. This will be provided to all new staff through induction programme.				support if required through the VS.
4 Pupil Education Plans (PEPs) are of a consistently high standard that set challenging targets for academic progress and personal development Links to KD 3 Practice Development Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. PEP meetings are quality assured by the head of school ii. The PEP is reviewed to align with current data collection of other pupils iii. All staff, including IROs, are trained to offer appropriate support and challenge during PEP meetings. iv. The VS will produce a model PEP with descriptors/checklist included v. Survey of schools to evaluate the effectiveness of PEP meetings 	JE/EW LAC Team	March 2014	PEPs inform early intervention and are owned by all professionals working with Looked After Children. Survey confirms that 100% meetings are good or better	PEPs are now being carried out termly. New PEPs are under development to be piloted in the summer term for roll out in September. Training on completing the PEP and managing meetings to be offered in the summer term.
5 Effective leadership and management of the Virtual School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Management committee established with appropriate representation from schools, education, social care, health and carers ii. Meetings are planned and offer challenge to the VS 	JE/EW/KMc	October 2013	The work of the VS is robustly monitored by the Management Committee	Governing Body now meeting termly. VS reporting to LA Practice Development Board

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. head Services are working collaboratively to meet the needs of LAC iv. A briefing note will be provided to all designated teachers setting out the role of different services and clarifying all of the different outcomes measures identified for all services. 				
<p>6 Effective opportunities for Designated Teachers to share effective practice</p> <p>Links to KD 5 Practice Development Board)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Termly meetings established for staff in schools and settings to share effective practice. ii. Opportunities for experienced DTS to mentor new DTs iii. Expectations are shared with schools and setting regarding the tracking of pupil progress and reporting through the PEP 	LAC Team(Education and Social Care)	First meeting January 2014	<p>Staff in schools and settings have the opportunity to share effective practice and are updated on national expectations</p> <p>Evaluations of meetings indicate that 100% view them as us good or better</p> <p>Pupil progress is tracked (see 3 above)</p>	First DT meeting – 30 at the South meeting and 28 at the North meeting representing 37 schools.
7 The progress of all pupils who are entitled to statutory education is monitored	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Where appropriate Education Advisers will attend post-16 PEPs and track the pupils' progress. ii. Welfare Call will continue to monitor the attendance of LAC who remain in education not training Progress and iii. 	LAC Team (Education) Welfare Call	November 2013 September 2014	<p>All post 16 pupils are tracked through to age 18 and age 25 for pupils with statements</p> <p>A 10% reduction in the number of LACs who are identified as NEET</p>	<p>Education Advisers attending post 16 PEPs when requested.</p> <p>VS Head working with Social care and Youth Support to prevent current Y11s from becoming NEETs. Youth Support</p>

	placement/employment information will be tracked for all care leavers.				Manager attending Y11 PEPs where appropriate.
8 A clear understanding of roles and responsibilities of all staff working to support LAC within Children’s Services Links to KD 7 Practice Development Board)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Head of VS and Head of LAC Social Care to meet twice a month to review practice ii. Joint professional development for education and social care teams on the national expectations for LAC 	JE/EW	October 2013	Improved communications and understanding of working practice across teams	<p>Social Care and Virtual School meeting twice a month to discuss the most vulnerable pupils.</p> <p>Education Advisers working one day a week in Stephenson Court.</p> <p>Joint training took place in November and January.</p>
9 Full time school/setting places are identified when a child is placed into care or moves carers Links to KD 9 Practice Development Board)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Effective communication is maintained through regular joint education and social care training ii. Communication is monitored by head of VS and Social Care (LAC) iii. PEP meetings are arranged within three weeks of a school placement iv. All relevant documentation is completed on time and shared where appropriate v. Education Advisers liaise with Social Workers on appropriate school placement vi. Head of VS liaises with admissions if needed 	LAC Team(Education and Social Care)	March 2014	<p>Pupils are placed in schools within ten working days of going into care</p> <p>PEP meetings are arranged within the first three weeks of school placement</p>	<p>The regular meetings with Social Care are supporting improved school placement.</p> <p>Not all Lac are placed on good schools but any new placements this is now taking into consideration.</p>

<p>10. Communication across all agencies, including schools and foster carers is improved</p>	<p>vii. The VS GB will identify improved communication methods with schools and foster carers, including website and newsletters</p>	<p>JE GB</p>	<p>March 2014</p>	<p>Website developed Monthly newsletter to foster carers</p>	<p>Joint meetings and VS representation at carers meetings</p>
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LAC Validated Outcomes 2013

Key Stage 1

9 pupils (8 pupils attending Central Bedfordshire schools and 1 an out of authority school).

4 pupils (44%) achieved L2+ in English
5 pupils (55%) achieved L2+ in mathematics.

This 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.

National Comparison

67% of pupils achieved L2+ in reading
57% of pupils achieved L2+ in writing
71% achieved L2+ 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, and this is monitored.

KS2

12 pupils (10 attending Central Bedfordshire schools and 2 in out of authority schools).

8 pupils (66%) achieved level 4+ in English
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 is being tracked. They should then progress to A levels and on to higher education.

3 pupils (25%) achieved L2 or L3 in English
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.

1 pupil, educated in a Special School, made appropriate progress within the P levels.

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.

KS4

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.

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.

5 A* - G:

2 pupils (10%) achieved 5 A* - G with 1 attending a Central Bedfordshire Upper School and 1 educated OOA.

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.

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.

Those pupils with poor attendance in Year 11 did not achieve well academically with only one of them gaining one pass at GCSE. This has been a priority for action in 2013/2014.

Meeting: Corporate Parenting Panel
Date: 24 March 2014
Subject: Update report: Fees and Allowances for Foster Carers
Report of: Cllr Mark Versallion, Executive Member, Children's Services
Summary: The report outlines a review of the foster care allowance scheme to increase remuneration to council foster carers and address the high use of independent foster agency placements.

Advising Officer: Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Children's Services
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 Strategic Plan 2012-16 Priority 3 – Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable

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

Providing a sufficient number and range of foster placements is a key statutory responsibility to Looked After Children

Financial:

1. Overheads for the Fostering Service are fixed and will not be increased as a result of the proposed increase in number of in-house placements.
2. The increased cost of implementing the Fee scheme with current number of in-house placements is £298k. This is cost incurred before any growth in foster placements. The increased cost of a further 10 placements in 2014-15 is an additional £144k. Adding these together, the proposed increase fits within the agreed cost for 2014-15 of £499k.
3. For the year 2015-16, increase of a further 15 in-house placements is costed at £218k.

Legal:

4. The Children Act 1989 identifies a statutory duty for Councils to provide sufficient accommodation in their local area and to provide maintenance for children who are looked after.
5. The Fostering Service (England) Regulations 2011, associated Statutory Guidance and National Minimum Standards outline the Council's responsibility to ensure that foster carers are given clear information about the allowances, fees and expenses available to them. The allowance must be sufficient to cover the cost of caring for a child placed with them and must be reviewed annually.

Risk Management:

6. Regulatory Risks: The provision of sufficient and suitable foster placements is a key activity monitored by Ofsted during inspection, forming part of their judgement about services for Looked After Children.
7. Child Protection Risks: Failure to recruit or retain sufficient foster carers would be a child protection risk.
8. Reputational Risk: Recruitment of foster carers is a competitive market activity and has a high media profile.
9. Financial Risk: Looked after Children placements is a demand led activity. Independent Agency Placements are high cost, and variations in the proportion of independent versus in-house placements can have significant and immediate impact on forecast spend.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

10. There are no staffing implications from these proposals.

Equalities/Human Rights:

11. Fostering allowances must meet the cost of caring for a child. The allowance scheme must ensure that any additional costs incurred in caring for a disabled child or a child with other specific needs is met. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and to pay at least the basic recommended level of allowances meets the requirements of the assessment.

Community Safety:

12. There are no implications from these proposals.

Sustainability:

13. There are no implications from these proposals.

RECOMMENDATION:

- The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to comment on and note progress on the development and implementation of the new fostering fees scheme

Reason for Recommendation:	To manage the sufficiency and affordability of placements for looked after children.
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Background

14. The Council has a duty to provide a range of types of placements for looked after children which meet their needs. In most cases a child's needs should be met by living in a family setting, either with someone known to them (known as a friends and family or connected person foster placement) or with foster carers.
15. The Council recruits its own foster carers, known as 'in-house' foster carers and also has the legal responsibility for assessing and approving friends and family foster carers. In order to meet the demand for placements for children in care, foster placements are also bought from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's). Central Bedfordshire Council, in conjunction with Luton Borough Council and Bedford Borough Council has a Framework Agreement with 18 such agencies to offer suitable and sufficient IFA placements within a tight cost and quality framework.

Purpose of the New Fostering Fees Scheme

16. The current average cost of Independent Fostering providers is £758 per week (£39,387 per year). In contrast, the current average cost of an in-house placement is £420 per week (£21,840 per year). This presents a current cost difference of £338 per week. It is clearly desirable to increase the number of in-house placements and reduce the number of more expensive Independent Fostering placements.
17. In September 2013, the Executive Committee of the Council agreed a plan to increase in house foster carer recruitment and to retain existing carers through the introduction of a fee based scheme to improve rewards to in-house carers. This scheme costs an additional £499,000 per year to the Council.
18. On 02 January 2014, the joint service that provided a Fostering and Adoption service for Bedford Borough ended. Following the end of this arrangement, further work has been undertaken on the new scheme to ensure this is competitive with neighbouring authorities.
19. From 01 April 2014 we will pay the following fees to mainstream foster carers; Tier 1 carers will receive £100 per week per child placed and Tier 2 carers will receive £175 per week. The existing Youth Care scheme will be paid as Tier 3 carers on the same rate as currently paid.
20. This approach recognises the additional responsibilities that mainstream carers carry, as they take on the care of a variety of different children in placements for task centred fostering. Fostering allowances will continue to be based on the annually updated Fostering Network rates.
21. On 31 January 2014 there were 273 children Looked After by Central Bedfordshire Council, 203 children are placed with either in-house or independent agency foster family. This represents 74% of the LAC population placed with foster carers, which compares reasonably with the statistical neighbours figure of 75%.

22. At end of January 2014 of these 203 children, 95 were placed with in-house carers and 108 children were placed with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's). This represents a ratio of 47% to 53%.
23. By introducing a fee scheme for in-house carers, it is intended to change this ratio so that a higher number of children in care are placed in-house. Through increasing the number of in-house placements by 25 over two year period (and reducing IFA placements by 25) the ratio will be reversed to a more favourable 59% in-house placement and 41% with IFA's.
24. The age profile of children placed with foster carer's shows the need for carers for children under the age of 10 years. However, more carers are needed for all age ranges particularly for sibling groups of children.

Table 1 Age Profile of Children in Care in Foster Placements

Age profile all LAC in foster placements end Jan 2014 (n = 203)

	Family & Friends Carers	Family & Friends Carers as %	Mainstream Foster Carers	Mainstream Foster Carers as %	IFA Carers	IFA Carers as %
0 to 4	13	31%	14	26%	28	26%
5 to 10	18	43%	17	32%	43	40%
11 to 15	8	19%	20	38%	26	24%
16+	3	7%	2	4%	11	10%
Total	42	100%	53	100%	108	100%

Summary of Planned Increase in In-house Foster Carers

- Current number of in-house placements = 95
 - 2014-15 planned number of in-house placements = 105
 - 2015-16 planned number of in-house placements = 120
25. It is recognised that foster care provision in Central Bedfordshire will continue to be a mixed market of in-house and IFA placements, to provide an efficient and effective service. We aspire to increase the proportion of in-house fostering provision and reduce the use of IFA placements, in line with our statistical neighbours and preferably trend towards the higher performing local authorities with a significant majority of in-house foster placements.

Details of the Scheme

26. Tier 0 - Family and Friends carers

This level is intended for those carers who will solely be approved for a specific child or children. Fostering allowances are currently paid at 110% of the Fostering Network recommended rate. This would continue to cover the costs for the child, and would be the payment made to friends and family carers who would not receive the household skills rate (Tiers 1 & 2). Once approved, they will be expected to complete the Training Development Standards, as well as core training such as First Aid, Safeguarding and Safer Caring.

27. Tier 1 - Mainstream carers

This level applies to mainstream carers who are available for any children the Council may propose to place with them, within their agreed approval range. The expectation is that they show willing to consider placements presented and provide clear reasons for declining placements. They will have completed the Skills to Foster course and a full assessment that has been approved via Fostering panel. A fee of £100 per week on top of the fostering allowance for the child will be paid to newly approved mainstream foster carers for their first year of caring, or until they achieve the Training Support and Development (TSD) mandatory workforce development standards. It is expected that they will make a commitment to completing the TSD within the first year. This replaces the current additional fee of £100 that has been paid to mainstream carers where child placed is 13 or over. This acknowledges that challenging needs are present in all age bands, not just teenagers (excluding Youth Care scheme that caters for additionally complex placement needs, which is dealt with separately). They will also have completed a Personal Development Plan that identifies specific learning and development needs and how these will be accomplished. Carers who cease to meet the standards can also be reduced to a lower tier. The fostering allowance is paid at Fostering Network rates, according to the age bands as published annually.

28. Tier 2 – Mainstream carers

Carers must have been fostering for two years at Tier 1 before progressing to Tier 2. The fostering allowance is paid at regular Fostering Network rates, according to the age bands as published annually. Carers who cease to meet the standards can be returned to a lower Tier. Carers at this level will also be required to have successfully completed additional core training as defined by the Fostering Service, maintaining an active training profile that reflects on their continuous professional development. The Personal Development Plan will identify specific training expectations that evidence competencies and contribute to the learning of others. Carers at this level will also be sought to contribute to wider aspects of the service such as being Buddy or Mentor to less experienced foster carers and/or contributing to training and recruitment activities. When they reach this competency level, the fee will increase to £175 per week per child placed.

29 Tier 3 – Mainstream carers – complex needs

This level is currently provided within the Youth Care scheme and a higher fee of £385 is paid to a small number of carers with a commitment to providing maximum occupancy and working with complex and demanding placements that require a higher level of support and supervision.

It is proposed that this scheme is re-evaluated in near future, but for the present is continued as a small cohort and utilised more flexibly with regard to age range of placements. Practice has shown that there are younger children who may well benefit from a specialist placement such as the Youth Care scheme have to offer.

30. Summary of Fees and Allowances for the New Scheme 2014-15

Age range	Fostering Network baseline	Tier 0 (no fee) Allowance	Tier 1 £100 fee + Allowance	Tier 2 £175 fee + Allowance	Tier 3 £385 fee + Allowance
0 to 4	£140.33	£154.36	£240.33	£315.33	
5 to 10	£159.85	£175.84	£259.85	£334.85	
11 to 15	£199.00	£218.90	£299.00	£374.00	£603.90
16+	£242.08	£266.29	£342.08	£417.08	£651.29

31. Summary of Benefits of the new Fee scheme

- Be more competitive with neighbours and attract more carers
- Prevent children going to IFA placements and bring those in IFAs back to in-house placements in a planned way
- Incentivise foster carers to complete mandatory training and enable them to feel the council is treating them as paid professional carers
- Prevent loss of existing carers either to competitors or because they can no longer afford to foster
- Encourage foster carers who would otherwise need to work to be more available for fostering at no financial detriment to their household
- Have carers more available to meet the needs of younger children, and potential savings on extra costs such as transport to school
- Increase the provision of in-house placements and reduce the use of IFA placements by 25 over two years

Conclusion and Next Steps

32. The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to comment on and note progress on the development and implementation of the new fostering fees scheme.

Appendices:

None

Background Papers:

None