

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 15, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford on Monday, 2 February 2015

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 S Harrison – Director of Children’s Services

Carers (non-voting)

Mr P Albon
Ms N Banks
Mrs H Philips
Mr D Thorne

Apologies for Absence: Mrs J Dickinson, Head of Leisure and Libraries
Mrs J Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Members in Attendance: Cllr P N Aldis

Officers in Attendance:	Ms A Craig	– Practice Manager Fostering, Children's Services
	Mrs J Franklin	– Interim Team Manager Adoption
	Mrs C Jones	– Acting Chief People Officer
	Mr G Jones	– Assistant Director Children's Services Operations
	Mrs E Kilcommins	– Commissioning Manager
	Mr L Manning	– Committee Services Officer
	Mrs E Saunders	– Assistant Director Commissioning
	Ms M Short	– Participation Officer
	Mr E Wong	– Head of Corporate Parenting

Others in Attendance: Children in Care Council Representatives

CPP/14/35. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 1 December 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CPP/14/36. **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/14/37. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman reported that he had attended an East of England regional event on Children's Services hosted by Cambridge County Council. He referred to comparative data for 2012-14 which had been considered and the very good impression created by Central Bedfordshire Council's performance. He congratulated the Council's officers, foster carers and Children in Care Council for their efforts.

CPP/14/38. **Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme**

The Panel considered a slide pack, circulated at the meeting, which outlined the progress made with regard to the introduction of the Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme.

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

The Interim Chief People Officer introduced the slide pack and emphasised how the Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme had matured as a result of the experience gained with the 2013/14 pilot. Members then raised a number of points for clarification regarding such issues as the availability of non office based apprenticeships, the adequacy of the level of the financial support paid to apprentices and the reasons why some young people had left the apprenticeship scheme before gaining a level 2 qualification. The meeting noted the availability of training in manual trades elsewhere but a Member commented that the level of payment under the Council's apprenticeship scheme was generous in comparison to that offered to some trainees. She added that some college trainees also left their training scheme before qualifying. Following further discussion the Interim Chief People Officer undertook to provide Members with a full explanation of level 2, level 3 and NVQ qualifications.

Consideration was then given to the involvement by Looked After Children in the Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme, given only one had participated in the 2013/14 pilot and had left before completing their level 2 qualification. In

response the Interim Chief People Officer explained the difficulty experienced in securing applications from this group, despite the availability of assistance with the application process, and she was unable to advise as to why some Looked After Children had chosen not to apply. A Member pointed out that the Children in Care Council (CiCC) had stated that the benefits received by young persons living independently could be adversely affected by joining an apprenticeship scheme. Another Member emphasised the importance of providing assistance to Looked After Children to help them deal with the formal application process but a Foster Carer representative expressed concern that, as a carer, she had not been made aware that assistance was available. She suggested that foster carers should also be trained to provide such assistance.

Whilst welcoming the development of the Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme the Chairman stressed the need for additional information to be provided to the Panel regarding the participation of Looked After Children in the Scheme so that they were able to monitor developments.

NOTED

the slide pack on the Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme

RESOLVED

that a report be submitted to the Corporate Parenting Panel setting out information on the reasons why Looked After Children applied or failed to apply to join the Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme, the reasons why some applicants were successful and others were not, what Looked After Children's own expectations were and what they wished to do at the end of the apprenticeship period.

CPP/14/39. Central Bedfordshire Council's Approach to Corporate Parenting Plan 2014 - 2017

The Panel considered a report summarising the key points in the plan entitled 'Our Approach to Corporate Parenting in Central Bedfordshire Council 2014 – 2017'. A copy of the above Approach plan, which was an Ofsted requirement, was attached at Appendix A to the report. Members were asked to note the Approach plan's content and support its implementation.

The meeting noted that the Approach plan consisted of the following three sections:

- Section one described the legislative framework, leading to the rationale in creating the new Corporate Parenting Service and its achievement to date
- Section two set out the priorities and seven strategic objectives for 2014 – 2017
- Section three described the Corporate Parenting Panel's monitoring role.

In addition there were four appendices to the Approach plan covering the following:

- Central Bedfordshire's pledge to Children in Care
- the Charter to Care Leavers
- the Action Plan produced by the Corporate Parenting Operations Group which set out the action required to implement the Approach plan
- the Sufficiency Plan which outlined how the Council would meet its statutory duty in securing, as far as was reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within its area to meet the needs of Central Bedfordshire Council's Looked After Children and Care Leavers. The Sufficiency Plan also captured the known demand for accommodation for Looked After Children and Care Leavers and provided details of how the Council would commission and influence accommodation provision and other types of provision to meet changing demand.

In response to a Member's query the Chairman stated that not all members of the Council were as aware of their responsibilities as Corporate Parents as they should be. Although training sessions had taken place on this matter not all Members had attended. The Chairman stated that he had been advised that such training could not be made mandatory but he intended to introduce a further programme of training sessions following the elections in May.

On the basis that most Looked after Children originated from families experiencing hardship a Member asked whether the Council was doing sufficient to address the growing problem of families, living in socially deprived areas, who experienced difficulty in coping and whose children were on the edge of care. The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations replied that, in such circumstances, the Council, in cooperation with the Health Services, would take supportive action to prevent the situation from worsening. In response to another Member's comments regarding the provision of assistance from such bodies as the local church the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations acknowledged the contribution that they made and the importance of a coordinated response. He referred to the development of the Council's locality teams which provided links between groups to enable such a response to take place. The Director of Children's Services warned of the problem of creating a culture of dependency within some families and explained that the aim was, instead, to help the formation of resilience.

A Member suggested a number of amendments to the Approach Plan regarding the inclusion of various dates and page numbers and requested that an update report be submitted at a future Panel meeting. A further query followed from a Member on the provision of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) as the new service was scheduled to start on 1 April 2015. In response the Head of Corporate Parenting advised that a new provider had been identified and negotiations had started on translating the contract into action. The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations added that the change in provider presented a major opportunity to improve the quality of service offered and the provider had expressed enthusiasm in working with the Council.

In response to a query on the appointment of a Clinical Psychologist to support in-house foster carers so that the children's emotional needs were better met, the meeting noted that the appointee would work 18 hours a week in this role and be based within the Head of Corporate Parenting's service. There would be no additional cost.

A Member referred to the comment within Objective 3 of the report that children placed outside the local authority area were less likely to receive good support from the virtual school. In response the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations stated that changes had been introduced and the report did not represent the current position. The Head of Corporate Parenting undertook to amend the Objective to reflect this.

Following further discussion the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations set out the need to submit a work programme to future Corporate Parenting Panel meetings to ensure reviews of the documents brought before the Panel were carried out as necessary and the Panel's business was managed in the most effective manner.

NOTED

the content of the plan entitled 'Our Approach to Corporate Parenting in Central Bedfordshire Council 2014 – 2015'.

RESOLVED

that full and unanimous support be given for the implementation of the plan entitled 'Our Approach to Corporate Parenting in Central Bedfordshire Council 2014 – 2015' through the actions set out within the Corporate Parenting Action Plan 2014 – 2017 at Appendix 3 to the Approach plan.

CPP/14/40. **Adoption and Fostering**

The Panel considered a report which introduced the Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose 2014/15, the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2014/15 and the Adoption Reform Grant (Part B) 2014/15 for Members' consideration. Copies of these documents were attached to the report at Appendices A, B and C respectively.

Members noted that it was a statutory requirement to make explicit the Statements whilst the Adoption Reform Grant document provided a progress report on how the Grant money was spent during the first three Quarters of 2014/15.

The Interim Team Manager Adoption introduced the report and worked through the accompanying appendices, drawing attention to issues of particular interest. A Member then raised various queries regarding the Statements of Purpose. In response to the first the Interim Team Manager Adoption explained that, as the result of a legislative requirement, the term 'Agency'

rather than 'Service' had to be used on the cover of the Adoption Service's Statement, though the term 'Service' was used within the document itself.

The Interim Team Manager Adoption then confirmed that, as stated throughout both Statements, they would be reviewed in March 2015 even though this was only a month away. The Head of Corporate Parenting acknowledged that there had been a substantial delay in submitting the Statements to the Panel and stated that they should have been brought before Members for consideration at a far earlier date.

The Member then requested that the period covered by the Statements be more clearly defined by the addition of the start and finish months on their covers. She also suggested that Appendix A to the Fostering Service Statement, which set out the structure of the Corporate Parenting Service, should also be included as an appendix to the Adoption Agency Statement. The Member went on to suggest various amendments to the Adoption Reform Grant at Appendix C.

The foster carer representatives present expressed concern regarding the level of consultation undertaken with them, the absence of feedback and that the data within the Statements was out of date. The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations assured the foster carer representatives that the data would be fully revised in time for the next version of the documents.

Debate then took place on the need for certain issues considered by the Panel to be scrutinised and, if so, which body should undertake this function. The Chairman stated that he would discuss this matter further with the Member outside the meeting. The Member emphasised that she had wanted to make clear that challenges were made and matters were not merely approved automatically.

In conclusion the Panel discussed the statement within the Adoption Reform Grant document that the number of children adopted continued to increase. The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations was of the opinion that this increase was not certain. He advised of the impact of the Family Courts in making adoption decisions and the downward pressure this was having on the number of adoptions approved. He also referred to those cases which had arisen as a result of the approach towards care proceedings adopted by Bedfordshire County Council as one of Central Bedfordshire's legacy authorities and that this number would naturally decline as the cases were dealt with. A Member expressed the hope that the outcome of the former County Council's policy had now peaked.

RESOLVED

that the content of the Adoption Agency and Fostering Service Statements of Purpose 2014/15 and the Adoption Reform Grant (Part B) be approved subject to incorporating the amendments raised by Members and outlined in the preamble above.

CPP/14/41. **Quarter Three Fostering Service Report**

The Panel received a report which outlined activity in the Fostering Service during Quarter Three (October – December 2014).

The report provided updates for the following:

- Recruitment of Foster Carers
- Assessments
- Referrals/Placements
- Training
- Ofsted Notifications
- Allegations
- Complaints
- Compliments
- Conclusion

The Practice Manager Fostering worked through the report and brought matters of interest to the Panel's attention. Members then sought clarification on a number of points including the reason for placing children with Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) carers by the Emergency Duty Team during the 'out of hours' period. In response the Practice Manager Fostering explained that it was standard procedure for the service to attempt to identify an in-house carer but, where this wasn't possible, the Head of Service could give approval for a placement to be made with an IFA carer. The Chairman requested that this issue be summarised and made clear in future quarterly reports.

NOTED

the content of the Quarter Three report on the Fostering Service for the period October to December 2014.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.00 p.m.)

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Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme

Corporate Parenting Panel

02 February 2015

Pilot scheme 2013/4

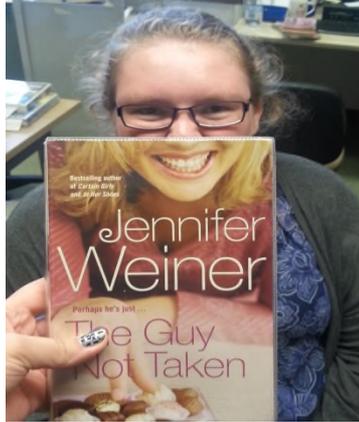
Objectives agreed:

- Aim at young people
- Rate of pay to be above basic apprenticeship rate
- Equal access to scheme for LAC for Level 2 qualification
- To be used to support Organisational Development

Pilot Scheme in delivery

- 21 Apprenticeships offered - Level 2 qualification
- Paid £120 per week (above min apprenticeship rate)
- 12 month fixed term contracts
- Appointed Learn Direct as service provider

Meet our apprentices



Results of Pilot

21 completed the full year apprenticeship of which:

- **4** apprentices took up permanent jobs in CBC
- **2** apprentices took up temporary jobs in CBC
- **6** apprentices took up a level 3 apprenticeship at CBC
- **3** left having successfully completed their level 2 qualification and taken up new roles in other organisations
- **6** left before completing their level 2 qualification (including 1 LAC)

This is a 57% retention rate

Formal evaluation of scheme undertaken

“The experience of working in a real business environment with great people is brilliant”

“Once I’ve completed my apprenticeship, I would like to stay on and learn more new things and work my way up the council and further my career”

What our apprentices said....

“I would definitely recommend the programme and organisation to others as it gets you a qualification and is also a great place to work”

“I always know what I am supposed to be doing. If I find something I can’t do I always ask my manager or my mentor and they will always be on hand to help me and explain what to do”

Formal Evaluation summary

Positives

- Most apprentices keen to stay within CBC
- Some great examples of internal coaching and support have been cited
- Broadly, a positive experience for most apprenticeships

Learnings

- Required varying levels of support
- Standardised training plans not always sufficient
- Learn Direct did not live up to expectations as a provider
- 12 months not enough time for some qualifications

Apprenticeship Scheme 15/16

- On the job learning and work experience leading to a professional qualification
- Apprenticeships at Level 2 and Level 3 with fixed term contract lengths of 14 and 18 months respectively
- Vacancies advertised on National Apprenticeship Service Website & our CBC website
- Improved support package, including individual learning plans

Specific to LAC

Traineeships

- Traineeship will be offered and administered by the Children's Services L&D team
- Suitable for 16-18 qualified below level 3 or 19-23 and not yet achieved level 2
- Traineeships will be run in cohorts approximately every quarter

Apprenticeships

- Active encouragement to apply for vacancies
- Guaranteed an interview
- If successful, a guaranteed offer of apprenticeship
- Greater ongoing support throughout apprenticeship

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