

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford on Monday, 23 March 2015

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

Cllrs M A G Versallion (Chairman)
A L Dodwell (Vice-Chairman)
D Bowater
N B Costin
Mrs S A Goodchild
K Janes (in place of Mrs A Barker)
B Wells

Officers (voting)

Mrs J Ogley – Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Carers (non-voting)

Mrs D Addams
Ms N Banks

Apologies for Absence: **Elected Members (voting)**

Mrs A Barker
N J Sheppard

Officers (voting)

Mrs J Dickinson, Head of Leisure and Libraries
Mrs S Harrison, Director of Children's Services

Carers (voting)

Mrs H Philips MBE, Foster Carer
Mr D Thorne, Foster Carer

Members in Attendance: Cllr R D Berry

Officers in Attendance:	Mr A Ahmed	– Team Manager 13+Transition & Leaving Care
	Ms S Hall	– Social Worker
	Mr G Jones	– Assistant Director Children's Services Operations
	Mr L Manning	– Committee Services Officer
	Miss H Redding	– Assistant Director School Improvement
	Mr E Wong	– Head of Corporate Parenting

Others in Attendance: Children in Care
Council
Representatives

CPP/14/42. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 2 February 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CPP/14/43. **Members' Interests**

No interests were declared.

CPP/14/44. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman informed the Panel that Councillor A Shadbolt, a long serving member of the Council, had died the evening before. The Panel's thoughts were with Councillor Shadbolt's family and friends on this sad occasion.

CPP/14/45. **Children in Care Council and Participation 2014-2015**

The Panel considered the Children in Care Council's (CiCC's) Annual Report for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015. The aim of the report was to summarise and evaluate the work undertaken by the CiCC and the Participation Officer during this period.

The Panel also received a presentation from the CiCC which complemented the Annual Report

A slide pack for the presentation was circulated and a copy is attached at Appendix A to these minutes.

The CiCC representatives worked through the presentation, each taking turns to introduce sections. At the conclusion the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations suggested that the Panel recognise the efforts of the CiCC representatives and thank them accordingly. The Chairman, on behalf of the Panel, concurred with this suggestion.

A Member referred to the use of acronyms within both the report and presentation and requested that officers provide a full explanation of an acronym's meaning in future documents. In response the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations apologised for this occurrence and undertook to ensure that this situation was not repeated.

The Vice-Chairman sought the CiCC representatives' views on their level of involvement in the development of the Passport to Independence. A CiCC representative stated that she had actively participated and had attended a

meeting with Housing officers. The Team Manager 13+ Transition and Leaving Care added that support from the Housing team had been excellent and officers had encouraged participation.

The Director of Social Care, Health and Housing then asked the CiCC representatives what single matter had made the biggest difference to them over the past year. In response one of the representatives explained how she was able to draw on her own experience to prepare a booklet which could be used by other Looked After Children going through a similar experience. Another representative referred to work undertaken on the Passport for Independence.

The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations referred to the Young Voices group and how he and the Chief Executive of the Council had played Jenga with some of the young people as a means to overcome boundaries and encourage them to talk about aspects of their lives. A foster carer representative said she was unaware of the group and sought information on how younger people found out about it. In response a CiCC representative explained that notification was made by letter and recruitment days arranged. Another CiCC representative stated that this information would also be available on the website when it became available. Discussion followed during which the Head of Corporate Parenting undertook to establish why the foster carer had not received information on the Young Voices group. With regard to the website, the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations acknowledged that there had been a substantial delay in its implementation but he felt that any problems had been overcome and the website would soon be available.

The Chairman expressed his thanks and stated that the Panel fully recognised the commitment of the CiCC representatives. The presentation had illustrated the CiCC's achievements and he asked that the CiCC representatives take a message back to their colleagues of the pride felt by the Panel. The Chairman also thanked the representatives for their honesty and willingness to share their views and encouraged them to continue to do so. He concluded by thanking, on behalf of the Panel, the CiCC for its contribution. In response the CiCC representatives thanked the Panel for permitting them to participate.

A CiCC representative asked if Members and officers had found that working with the CiCC had been helpful. In response the Chairman stated that it had been valuable whilst the Director of Social Care, Health and Housing referred specifically to how the CiCC's comments on Looked After Children and young people's housing provision had galvanised both her and the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations to change their approach on this issue. She added that she had been impressed with their contribution in general.

A Member expressed his congratulations to one of the CiCC representatives, an unaccompanied asylum seeker, for his English language skills given that he had only been resident in the UK for seven months.

Another Member referred to his own experience in encouraging young people to participate and take control of their lives. He also acknowledged how difficult it was to appear before a meeting such as the Panel but hoped that their

attendance would continue and that more young people would attend in the future.

NOTED

- 1 the Children in Care Council and Participation Annual Report 2014-2015;**
- 2 the presentation by the Children in Care Council representatives.**

RESOLVED

that the efforts of the Children in Care Council representatives be recognised and they be thanked for their contribution.

(Note: At the conclusion of this item the Children in Care Council representatives left the meeting).

CPP/14/46. Report of the Virtual School for Looked After Children

The Panel considered a report from the Director of Children's Services which explained the role of the Central Bedfordshire Virtual School, the confirmed educational outcomes for Looked After Children in the academic year 2013/14 and the measures taken in the current academic year 2014/15, in partnership with other agencies, to raise the achievement and progress of all Looked After Children.

The Assistant Director School Improvement introduced the report which, she explained, contained results which had now been validated. She then worked through the report, which covered the following matters, highlighting issues she felt to be of particular interest:

- Issues
- Background
- Exclusions
- Attendance
- Pupil's Achievement
- Governance
- Priority Actions for 2014/15

The Assistant Director School Improvement then updated the Panel on recent developments regarding targeted support including additional support for foster carers, the extension of the Pupil Premium into early years and moving the Virtual School predominantly online. She also referred to the appointment of a Personal Advisor in the Virtual School to work three days a week tracking the progress of Looked After Children and to the Virtual School Head's invitation to speak to Education Inspectors on the role of the Virtual School.

A Member then raised a number of queries. In response the Assistant Director School Improvement confirmed that the Pupil Premium needed to be spent by

the end of the financial year or would be returned to the department for Education. She added that the monies were almost fully spent. With regard to the Premium's use to support group learning the Assistant Director School Improvement stated that it had funded individual pupils too date. She emphasised that every child was regarded as an individual and the Virtual School had adopted this approach in its service provision. It was recognised that pupils' needs varied on a year by year basis and so the focus needed to be individuals.

The Panel's attention was drawn to the absence of a comparative 2013 percentage figure from paragraph 26 of the report which dealt with Looked After Children achieving the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics for the year ending 31 March 2014. In response the Assistant Director School Improvement undertook to supply this information.

Further discussion took place regarding pupils' achievement under the Key Stage 4 Results for 2014. The Assistant Director School Improvement explained that one area which required examination related to those children who came late into care and hadn't developed academically due to the adverse background impacting on their emotional health and wellbeing.

A foster carer commented that the Virtual School was the most pro-active that she had been in contact with and expressed her thanks for this.

The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations commented on the improved content and greater detail of the reports on the Virtual School over the last two years and paid tribute to the Assistant Director School Improvement and the Virtual School Head for their leadership and control in this area.

Following further discussion and comment the Chairman, on behalf of the Panel, asked that the Panel's congratulations be taken back and shared with the Virtual School Head for the improvements which had been made.

NOTED

the outcomes for Looked After Children in the academic year 2013/14 and the impact of the measures taken since September 2014 to develop the role of the Virtual School in order to improve outcomes for Looked After Children and young people.

CPP/14/47. Presentation of Unit Award Statements

(Note: At the beginning of this item three of the Children in Care Council representatives returned to the meeting).

On behalf of the Panel, the Chairman presented Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) Unit Award Statements to Charlotte Chapman, Emily Smith and Rebeka Hillyard of the Children in Care Council in recognition of their work in helping to train some of Central Bedfordshire Council's social

workers during the latter's Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.12 a.m.)



Children in Care Council



The CiCC & Young Voices

- We currently have around 24 young people involved in the CiCC and participation activities. We are a mixed age range from 16 – 22.
- The Young Voices group is for 8 – 15 year olds. We have around 29 young people who are involved in this group. Young Voices are involved in activity based participation as well as consultation based participation.

CiCC

	16-18	18-21	21+
Male	4	10	1
Female	1	4	4

Young Voices

	8-12	13-15
Male	13	3
Female	11	2



CiCC Achievements

- **Awards** - this was the biggest event to date with 108 young people receiving their award on the night and over 200 young people being nominated.



- **Recruitment Involvement** – We have been involved with the recruitment of a number of permanent staff including managers and social workers.

CiCC Achievements

- **Working with the Commissioning Service** – We have been part of the tendering process for the Independent Visitors and Advocates and the supported housing providers.
- **Children's Commissioner** – Rebeka and Amy have been attending meetings with the Children's Commissioner's Participation Group and worked on the My Care Survey.
- **Summer activities** – There were activity days organised in the summer holidays where 36 young people attended at least one day, these included horse riding, a trip to the cinema and a trip to Gulliver's. The activities are very popular and members of the CiCC attend to act as peer mentors and take part in informal consultations.



CiCC Achievements

- **Peer Mentoring** – Members of the CiCC have continued to act as peer mentors with the young voices group, this has included a meeting with Richard Carr and Gerard Jones about what young voices feel about certain aspects of their life, what they like and what they feel needs improving such as better facilities for visiting families in centres and not having lots of different social workers. We also had a brilliant game of Jenga to get to know everyone.
- **Shadowing the Chief Executive** – I (Charlotte) was invited to shadow Richard Carr during his Management Group meeting, this was a really good opportunity which gave me an idea of what the council does.
- **The Frontline Programme** – We were part of the training of over 120 social work students on the Frontline Programme.
- **Consultations** – This has included consultations on the Passport to Independence, the awards, summer activities and the corporate parenting strategy.

CiCC Achievements

- **Training days for ASYE** – We have developed a training day for ASYEs which we deliver. This looks at what participation is and why it is important, it also looks at the way in which workers communicate. We help them to develop a social workers tool box to show why they wanted to become a social worker and inside are the tools they need to be a good social worker.
- **Consultation booklets** – We have worked with the Conference and Review Service to renew the consultation booklets for children who are looked after. Younger looked after children told us that they preferred to have space to draw and to have tick boxes for some of the questions. We have brought you some booklets for you to see.



CiCC Achievements

- **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Consultation Group**
– My Name is Dejen and I am part of a new group representing unaccompanied asylum seeking children, we started meeting in November and now meet every 6 weeks. 10 young people attend the meeting with our interpreters a manager and other workers.
- **The Group Discussions** – we talk about any problem we may have and workers explain how they can help, this could be about support with education, joining the gym, attending church in London, or about learning independence skills.
- **We said, you did** –
 - ✓ We asked for bikes and were supported to pass a cycling proficiency tests.
 - ✓ We asked to be supported to access leisure activities and we have had football coaching.
 - ✓ We requested support for education and Lucy Wanji talked to us about improving our grades, a teacher is now helping new learners with English.
 - ✓ We wanted to develop our independence skills and some of us are going to start a programme.
 - ✓ We enjoy attending the meetings and think they are helpful.

Future Plans

- **CICC Meetings** – we are planning monthly meetings and planning ways so more CiCC members can attend, including young people representing the Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers.
- **Meetings with Senior Managers**– regular meetings with Richard Carr, Sue Harrison, Gerard Jones, Edward Wong and Team Managers.
- **Pledge** - We would like to work with members of the Corporate Parenting Panel to update The Pledge.
- **Consultation** – Consultation topics will be agreed with service areas and the CiCC, a consultation day is being arranged with the IROs and Young Voices group on the LAC review process.
- **Newsletter** – the newsletter is being written by members of the CiCC and is sent to all looked after children, we now include Sue Harrison's Blog

CICC Future Plans

- **Leaving care packs** – The leaving care packs are a priority this year, so young people leaving care are provided with a friendly informative way of knowing what they are entitled to at what age and also ways to contact people such as housing and other services that could help us.
- **Website** – We are working on the Website and think this will be a way to develop our consultation with young people placed out of the local authority.
- **Consultation with young people in residential units placed out of the local authority** – Working with the commissioning service to develop information booklets and ways of consultation.

Thank you for listening.

Any Questions?