

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

**This meeting  
may be filmed.\***



**Central  
Bedfordshire**

**please ask for** Leslie Manning  
**direct line** 0300 300 5132  
**date** 12 March 2015

## **NOTICE OF MEETING**

### **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**

Date & Time

**Monday, 23 March 2015 at 10.00 a.m.**

Venue at

**Council Chamber, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford**

Richard Carr  
**Chief Executive**

## **PLEASE NOTE THE START TIME**

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

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

Clrs 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:

Clrs P N Aldis, Mrs D B Gurney, K Janes, B Saunders and A M Turner]

**Officers (voting)**

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.

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**The use of arising images or recordings is not under the Council's control.**

# 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 2 February 2015 (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

<b>Item</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Page Nos.</b>
5.	<b>Children in Care Council and Participation 2014-2015</b>  To consider the Children in Care Council's Annual Report for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.	* 23 - 44
6.	<b>Report of the Virtual School for Looked After Children</b>  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 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.	* 45 - 62
7.	<b>Presentation of Unit Award Statements</b>  To present AQA Unit Award Statements to members of the Children in Care Council in recognition of their assistance in the training of social workers.	

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**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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**APPENDIX A**

# **Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme**

Corporate Parenting Panel

02 February 2015

# Pilot scheme 2013/4

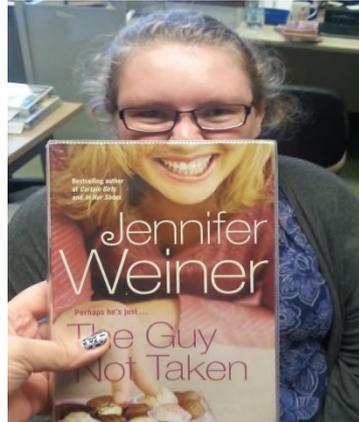
Objectives agreed:

- 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 administrated 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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**Central Bedfordshire Council**

**Corporate Parenting Panel**

23 March 2015

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**Children in Care Council and Participation 2014-2015**

Advising Officers:

Gerard Jones, Assistant Director of Children's Services  
([gerard.jones@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:gerard.jones@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

Marie Short, Participation Worker, Corporate Parenting Service  
([marie.short@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:marie.short@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

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**Purpose of this report:**

To update Members on the activities of Children in Care Council Participation as detailed in the Children in Care Council and Participation Annual Report (Appendix A)

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Panel is asked to

- note the content of the Children in Care Council's Annual Report 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

**Council Priorities**

1. The Children and Young People's Plan 2013-2015:
  - Protecting vulnerable children.
  - Put children at the centre of everything we do

**Corporate Implications**

2. To ensure that the Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities are met.

**Legal Implications**

3. Statutory requirements in respect of corporate responsibilities for Looked After Children and care leavers are met.

**Financial Implications**

4. The activities outlined were funded by the designated budget.

### **Equalities Implications**

5. The report acknowledges the need to increase the engagement and participation of children with disabilities and young people who are seeking asylum.

### **Conclusion and next Steps**

6. Present the report to the Corporate Parenting Panel on 23 March 2015. The Annual Report makes explicit the work plan for the next financial year 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A – Children in Care Council and Participation 2014-2015 Annual Report

### **Background Papers**

None

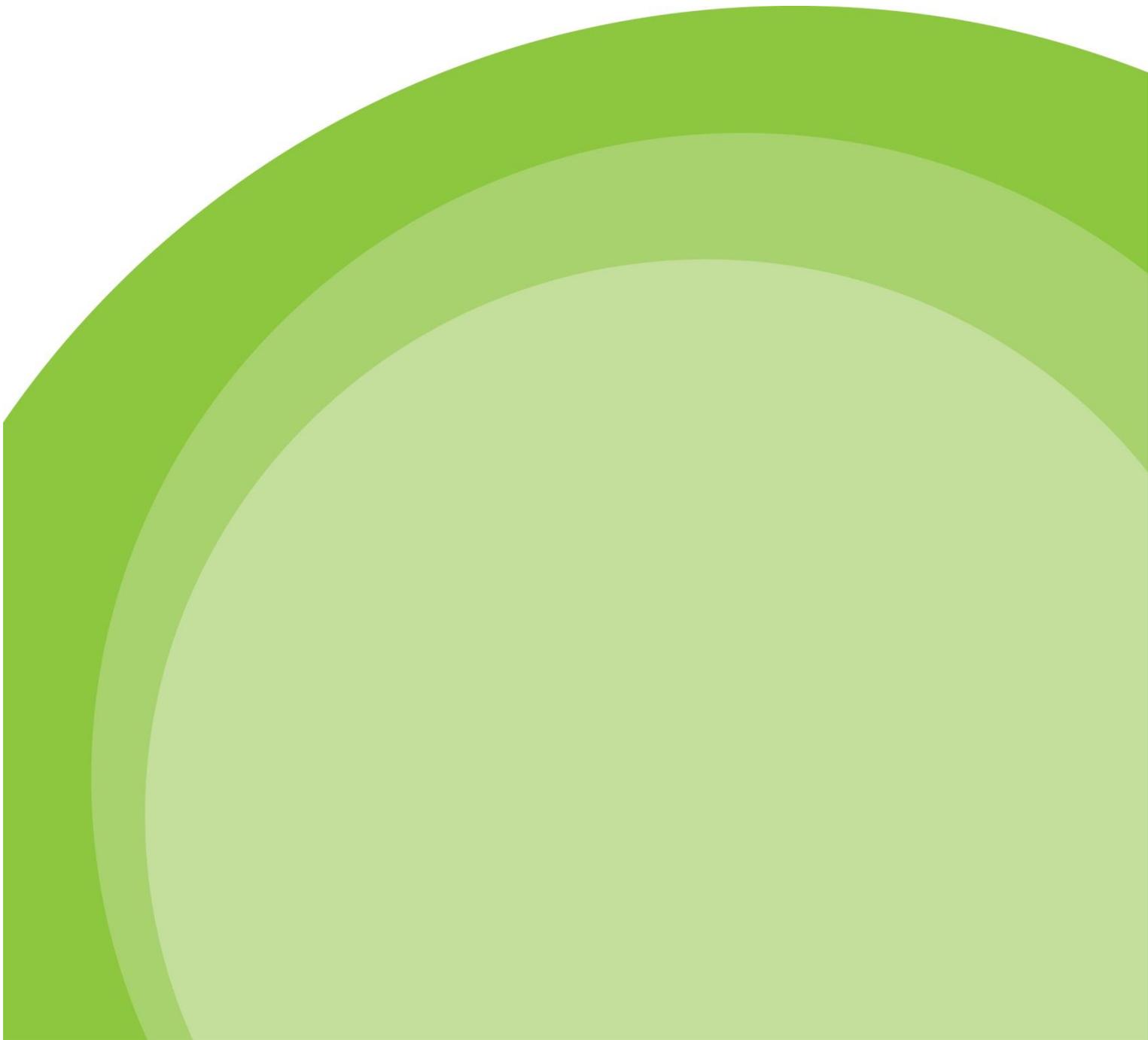
**Appendix A**

**Central Bedfordshire Council**  
[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)



# **Children in Care Council and Participation 2014 - 2015**

**Annual Report**



## **Aims and Objectives**

The aim of the following report is to summarise and evaluate the work of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Participation Officer during 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. See appendix 1.

Members of the CiCC have been asked –

## **What has the CiCC achieved over the last year**

- **The Awards** – This was the biggest event to date with 108 young people receiving their award on the night.
- **Recruitment Involvement** – CiCC members took part in the recruitment of the Director of Children’s Services, the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Board, 9 managers across Children’s Services, 2 personal advisers working for the Youth Support Team and 6 days of Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) social worker recruitment.
- **The Frontline Programme** – CiCC members organised training for 120 social work students and were asked to return to be part of another day as part of the training placement for the students.
- **Working with the Commissioning Service** – CiCC members were involved from the outset with the tendering processes for supported accommodation for leaving care young people and the advocacy and independent visitor contracts.
- **Shadowing the Chief Executive** – one member of the CiCC spent the afternoon shadowing the Chief Executive, Richard Carr at the Senior Management Team meeting.
- **Children’s Commissioner Participation Group** – 2 members of our CiCC attend this group.
- **Summer Activities** – 36 young people aged 8 – 15 years and 19 over 16 year olds attended one activity day.
- **Peer Mentors** – CiCC have continued to mentor younger looked after children (LAC).
- **Training Days for Assisted and Supported Year of Employment** – CiCC have developed and received accreditation for the training they delivered.
- **Consultation on Our approach to Corporate Parenting in Central Bedfordshire Council 2014 - 2017** – A group of young people including members of CiCC were consulted to make comments on the policy and action plan
- **Consultation Booklets** – new consultation booklets have been redesigned and re worded with the involvement of the CiCC..
- **Development of a Passport to Independence** – This was an idea from the CiCC members to help prove that they are ready to move to independent living.

### **What will be your priorities for 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016**

- CiCC Work plan to be developed and agreed.
- Review & Update the Pledge.
- To further develop the website.
- A focus group on Review Meetings to make them more child/young person friendly
- Work to promote the CiCC activities and encourage more social workers to attend.
- Social Workers activity box for each of the teams to ensure that social workers have tools to be able to engage with all ages of children and young people.
- More focused consultations to help to improve services.

### **Children in Care Council**

The CiCC continue to work to develop the group and encourage new members to join. Discussions have taken place with regards to the development of smaller focus groups to work on specific tasks, which will allow more young people to be part of the CiCC. Representatives from the groups will then attend the CiCC meetings, which are planned to take place monthly.

One of the groups which have been developed is a group of young people representing unaccompanied asylum seekers. There are currently 12 young people attending these meetings, which take place every month. Topics of discussion have been around attending church and being supported to do this, recreational activities including riding bikes and attending football-training sessions, which have been arranged through Central Bedfordshire Council's leisure service. Further discussions will take place with regards to the name of the group and how this will link to the CiCC.

Further groups which will be developed will be looking at the Looked After Children's Reviews – this group will be developed with the Independent Review Officers and young people on how to make to the review meetings more young person friendly. There will also be a group on the Passport to Independence Programme, which will involve our care leavers working to develop this document to support the transition into independent living.

The Young Voices for looked after children between the ages of 8 – 15 years, continues to develop with around 26 young people attending the most recent event along with a number of social workers. The feedback from the event was very positive, with young people stating that it was good to see their workers during a fun activity and that they would like to have more of these events with their workers. A number of CiCC representatives also attended to support the younger looked after children.

Members of the CiCC also met with Sue Harrison, the new Director of Children's Services to welcome her to Central Bedfordshire Council and provide information on the CiCC.

Newsletters continue to be sent out to all of our looked after children, these are written by CiCC members and recently have included Sue Harrison's blog to children and young people. Sue's blog is sent to CiCC members for their feedback and comments before being sent out. (See Appendix 2)

Members of the CiCC continue to attend Corporate Parenting Panel and present information on their work plan three times per year.

Regular meetings with the Chief Executive and the Director of Children's Services continue to take place. One member of the CiCC shadowed Richard Carr at a recent Senior Management Group meeting, which allowed the young person to learn more about what Central Bedfordshire Council does outside of Children's Services.

### **Consultation Events**

There have been a number of consultations taking place including the Passport to Independence workshop. This took place during the school holidays and a greater number of CiCC members were able to attend along with social workers and personal advisers, officers from the Commissioning service along with Cllr Wells and Cllr Goodchild and Richard Carr. The attendees worked together to start to develop the Passport to Independence. From this the key headings for the passport were agreed and there will be further development of the passport to enable it to be used as a tool to demonstrate that young people have the skills to move into independence.

Feedback from the event included –

*'I thoroughly enjoyed meeting with the young people, their social workers and personal advisers, it was a great opportunity, to listen to their stories and thoughts and openly discuss these in a setting, where they felt safe and very well supported.'* **Councillor Goodchild.**

*'It was a pleasure to attend the meeting with the boys and girls to listen to their issues and suggestions about setting up home on their own.'* **Councillor Wells.**

*'For me, it was really helpful to listen to the experiences and perspectives of at least some of our young people. If we want to deliver improvements for young people for whom we have a special responsibility, then I think it's really important that we hear their voices. Some of the issues raised present real dilemmas but I think it's important that they are explored and discussed.'* **Richard Carr.**

Looked After Children and Care Leavers met to redesign the looked after children's consultation documents which are sent to all looked after children before their review meetings. Young people also looked at the questions and

how they are worded and made the booklets more young person friendly. Reports from one of the Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) are that children are using the spaces to draw as well as write.

Members of the CiCC attended consultation days on the Central Bedfordshire Council's Homelessness Strategy; the young people represented the views of other care leavers and gave good examples of where the services to prevent and support homeless could be improved.

Two members of Central Bedfordshire Council's CiCC also attended the Children's Commissioners Participation group and worked on the My Care Survey. We are now encouraging all our young people to complete this survey.

The Eastern region participation leads organised a consultation with the Children's Commissioner Participation officers. Two members of the CiCC attended and gave their view on the services in Central Bedfordshire.

Young Voices have been consulted on the activity programme and have given their ideas for what activities they would like to try over the next year.

### **Annual Awards Evening**

The Annual Awards evening took place on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2014 in the Council Chambers at Priory House, over 200 nominations were received from social workers, foster carers and school staff.

This year 'Young Voices' planned the evening and suggested what entertainment, decorations, the design of the invites and the certificates should be. The evening started with a welcome from the CiCC members who then introduced the new Director of Children's Services, Sue Harrison. One of the CiCC members performed a song before Gerard Jones Assistant Director compered the evening. The Executive Member for Children's Services presented the awards, along with a social worker and personal advisor from the Corporate Parenting Service to each young person.

There were 108 young people who received their certificate, trophy and voucher on the night. All these young people had their photo taken and this was sent out after the event. The council chamber was decorated on a fairground theme along with fairground stalls including a coconut shy, tin can alley and a popcorn machine.

Feedback from the awards has been very positive from young people and professionals and was featured in Leighton Buzzard Observer. We also received some ideas for next year with regards to how the event is organised due to the fact that the event is bigger each year.

### **Activity Based Participation**

This years summer activities programme included 9 days of activities, the information is sent out to all looked after children living in an area close enough to travel. This year there were 36 children between the ages of 8 – 15

years, including 3 young people from the Children with Disabilities team, who attended at least one of these days. The activity days continue to encourage young people to participate in activities they may not have tried before but also gives them an opportunity to meet other looked after children and care leavers. The CiCC members attend the activities to act as peer mentors and to support young people.

During the pony day a young person who had no experience of ponies eventually faced his fears and took part in a riding lesson. The young person was not only pleased with his achievements but also demonstrated good behaviour, which was then passed onto his social worker and foster carer for them to praise him during a time when he was struggling to maintain good behaviour.

Whilst taking part in the activity programme informal consultations took place with young people to find out their views of services. One of the main areas of discussion was the high number of changes of social worker, with a number of young people stating they had had 3 or 4 changes. One young person explained there had been a number of changes when workers had not left CBC but there had been changes within the team. Another young person said that they had so many changes that they could not remember who their worker was. This information was shared with managers and social workers.

There was also an activity day for the over 16s at Sport Support, this gave the young people an opportunity to develop team skills and meet other care leavers. Through this we were able to recruit more young people to our participation / CiCC events.

These informal consultation activities allow us to get information from young people who would not necessarily take part in a CiCC meeting or complete a survey but when in a relaxed environment are happy to discuss things that matter to them.

### **CiCC Involvement**

Members of the CiCC including a representative from the Children with Disabilities team, have been part of the recruitment process for the Director of Children's Services, the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Board, managers for various teams within Children's Services and social workers applying for the Assisted and Supported Year of Employment, (ASYE).

The CiCC have further developed the training for the ASYE programme, where the CiCC members deliver the training to newly qualified social workers and will be developing an evaluation of the training. This includes the 'Social Workers Toolbox' which workers take away and will then evaluate 6 months after working as a social worker. Members of the CiCC who have delivered this training have achieved accreditation for this work, through The Academy.

The Frontline Programme, which is the new fast track social work training programme, requested Central Bedfordshire's CiCC to support the training

programme of over 100 social workers. The 10 members of the CiCC who took part developed the Social Work Toolbox as a way to ask the workers to look at the reasons they wanted to become a social worker and what qualities they would need. Then inside the box they discussed what tools they would need to make a good social worker, the young people received excellent feedback and were invited to be part of another training day and have been invited to train this year's cohort.

*'The contribution of the young people from Central Bedfordshire to the recent Summer Institute for Frontline participants was exceptional. The thoughtfully constructed exercise and their keenness to offer their expertise to trainee social workers learning was a key part of the education provided.'*

*The young people represented Central Bedfordshire Council's commitment to empowering young people in an exemplary fashion. They were enabled by the workers to run a session for 100 participants who unanimously reported that the learning they obtained from the young people as to what makes a good social worker will shape their future development. What was particularly satisfying to see was how in turn the young people blossomed and hopefully they felt a valued contributor. Hearing the young people confidently speaking to trainee social workers about what they perceived as the key skills and knowledge required for effective social work will have a lasting impact. It is to be hoped that the young people also gained from this experience.*

*Thank you so much arranging this and I hope we can work together in the future.'*

**Louise Grant, Principal Lecturer in Social Work, University of Bedfordshire**

The CiCC continues to be part of the training for foster carers, where they create a house to represent what makes a good foster carer and then the houses are taken to show new young people moving into the house what they can expect.

The CiCC are now part of the Induction Process for new members of staff starting within the Children's Services directorate. The CiCC have written a presentation and then allow a question and answer session. They have also created posters for the training room. Feedback from this has been very positive. *'It was to quote 'buzzing' it really was the best revamp of this programme we have done, it actually made the induction live. The new starters were amazed at what they received.'* Sandra Einon

Members of the CiCC worked with the Commissioning Service in the tendering process for supported accommodation for care leavers and the Independent Visitor and Advocate Service contracts,

**Participation Work Plan (Appendix 1)**

The seconded participation officer post created in 2012 was extended to cover the permanent post holder's maternity leave. This has now ended and the work plan going forward will be for one full time participation officer, this will impact on the work plan going forward.

As well as working with Looked After Children and Care Leavers, the participation officer is working alongside Research in Practice to develop the Voice of the Child within Child Protection.

### **Future Priorities**

The CiCC have discussed the need to redevelop the CiCC and how they meet. This will be a main focus of the work plan over the next year along with recruiting more young people to both the CiCC and Young Voices groups.

The CiCC write their own priorities and these need to be confirmed and agreed by the Corporate Parenting Panel, whilst taking into consideration any budget implications.

The activity programmes need to be developed with input from the CiCC and Young Voices and Central Bedfordshire Council's leisure services who are able to support the activity programme.

The Awards evening has been provisionally booked for Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2015 in the Council Chamber; discussions need to take place with facilities to ensure the event can take place in the Chamber. Representatives from the CiCC and Young Voices will work together to organise this year's event.

The CiCC have identified the need to update The Pledge to our looked after children. The current one was agreed in 2010, and an audit tool needs to be developed to make sure our young people are receiving what the Pledge says.

The development of the Passport to Independence continues and a focus group will be developed to work on this alongside the Leaving Care Team.

The CiCC website is still a priority but there have been IT challenges in relation to resources allocated to the project. Mock up website pages have been drawn up in addition to a prototype website to test functionality. The way forward would be to have a dedicated IT worker to implement the website and test its functionality.

### **Challenges**

Even though the number of young people involved in the CiCC and Young Voices has risen there is a perception that only certain young people are involved. This is mainly due to the timings of interviews, meetings and other events where young people are requested to take part. The number of young people available during the working day has decreased due to the increase in young people being involved in education, training or employment.

Discussions need to take place with regards to the support for participation activities and CiCC / Young Voices meetings, guaranteed support needs to be found, as they cannot take place with just one worker.

The CiCC have not received feedback when completing consultations and work and sometimes the involvement may seem tokenistic. For example when young people raised an issue with regards to the Young Inspectors inspecting Corporate Parenting Service and the question was asked around the involvement of the CiCC, they received no feedback. This information was then added to another report, which was then presented to Corporate Parenting Panel where CiCC members were present but did not feel able to ask the question.

### **Conclusion**

The CiCC continues to develop and change, however the young people themselves report that further work and support is needed to make this a better functioning group.

The CiCC need to develop their own work plan and priorities to ensure that the work they do is young person led, this will then support the group in ensuring they feel that the work they do is meaningful. This will take some time to nurture and empower young people to then develop the confidence of the group.

The Young Voices Group over the last year has continued to grow and the young people involved in this are enjoying the experience that this has brought. Further consultation will be developed with this group to ensure their feedback is used to develop services for looked after children.

Members of the CiCC continue to have strong links with the Corporate Parenting Panel and Senior Officers including the Chief Executive, the Director of Children's Services and the Assistant Director.

The CiCC continue to be involved in areas of work for Central Bedfordshire Council and gain valuable experience and skills in being part of this which has enabled young people to use the experience to show experience of work when applying for jobs or training.

Discussions need to take place with regards the future work plan of the Participation Officer for 2015.

### **Forward Plan**

See Appendix 3

**Appendix 1**

**Participation Work Plan 2014**

Priorities	Action	Timescales	Accountability	Outcomes	Update
Support CiCC with achieving priorities and work plan for 2014.	Continue to work through agreed priorities and work plan.	Ongoing throughout 2014	CiCC and Participation Officers	<p>Young people to have a voice in relation to the planning and delivery of services they receive. Feedback will influence and improve services to the Corporate Parenting Service.</p> <p>To develop a sense of belonging and shared identity with others who have similar experiences.</p> <p>To increase their confidence &amp; raise self esteem and establish transferable and valuable life skills.</p> <p>Be part of the planning and operational process.</p> <p>To engage with officers and elected members within CBC.</p>	Young People where involved in developing the new framework for recruiting semi-independent providers to provide a range of supported accommodation for Looked After Children & Care Leavers – this included a workshop with our commissioning team to develop the framework and 2 young people participated in the shortlisting of providers.
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.	All looked after children including those children with disabilities, are invited to all the activities and awards evening. There has been 3 young people attend the activities from this team as well as young people attending the awards evening. One young person from the CWD also supported

					the CiCC on the interview panel for the Director of Children's Services.
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 events and staff engagement.	<b>February</b> (half term) <b>April</b> (Easter holidays) <b>August</b> (Summer holidays) <b>October</b> (Half term) <b>December</b> (Winter holidays)	Participation Officers, managers in the Corporate Parenting Service, Social workers, Personal Advisors & Foster Carers	Increase the numbers of young people, including children with disabilities, engaging in participation activities.  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.	There were 36 children and young people who attended at least one day of the summer activities programme, this also included young people from the CWD team. There was also an activity day for the over 16 year olds and 19 young people attended this. The feedback from the older group was that they would like more of this type of activity.
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.  Increase the use of the independent advocacy service and peer mentors.	Consultations took place on the review documents which has resulted in new booklets being produced.  A passport to independence workshop was arranged which included young people, managers and Cllrs. Further development work will continue on this.
Further develop	CiCC to research into	Ongoing throughout	Participation Officers,	CiCC, looked after children and care leavers will have greater	Participation leads meeting

<p>relationships with members of Corporate Parenting Panel and the CiCC.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>2014.</p>	<p>CiCC and Councillors</p>	<p>opportunities to meet with councillors and discuss their experiences of care and contribute to service developments.</p> <p>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.</p>	
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Appendix 2

# Say It Loud!

Welcome to another edition of the children in care council's newsletter, we have worked really hard to change the service for all young people to give them a better experience of being a looked after child and a care leaver. We are going to tell you some of the things that the CICC have been up to the last few months.

## Awards Evening

This year the awards evening was held on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October. It was the biggest event to date, with over 200 nominations and over 100 young people attending. Cllr Versallion presented the awards and said: "I'm always delighted to attend this awards event, and to hear some of the amazing achievements by these truly inspiring children and young people. They really do prove that if you put your mind to something then the sky's the limit.



## Summer Activities

During the summer holiday we arranged a variety of activities for the young people to participate in. we did activities such as kempston outdoor centre, Gulliver's land and the cinema. During the activities the older children in care council acted as peer mentors, this would give them a chance to ask any questions that they may be afraid to ask their foster carers or social workers about.

## Children's Commissioner

Two members of our CICC have been attending meetings with the Children's Commissioner young expert group in London. We have been meeting to change the national survey that goes out every year to the young people, this is so we can get views and opinions on how good services are and how they can be improved. We have enclosed a leaflet with information on where to find the survey and would be grateful if you could complete this so we can also use the results to make things better in Central Bedfordshire.

## Christmas Events

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> December – Flitwick Village Hall. Christmas Party for young people over 16. For more information or to book a place please speak to your worker.

Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> December – Pizza Hut & Cineworld, Bedford. For young people aged 8-15, places are limited please contact Marie Short on 0300 300 4881.

## Introducing Sue Harrison



We have a new Director of Children's services, her name is Sue Harrison (pictured left), we met up with her to introduce the CICC and what we do. Sue is really interested in what our views are and we will be meeting with her to give her updates. Sue has written a blog for children and young people and we have added it to the back of our newsletter.

We looked forward to working with Sue and welcome her to Central Bedfordshire.

**THANKS FOR READING OUR NEWSLETTER! DAYTONA, CHARLOTTE & AMY!**



## SUE'S BLOG FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Hello,

You may well be wondering who is this person writing a blog? Well, I am your new Director of Children's Services. I have a wonderful job as I am responsible for making sure that young people in Central Bedfordshire are supported by good quality services from the moment they are born until they reach adulthood. These services include Children's Centres, youth work, schools and social work teams. I have already been able to visit some wonderful schools including Redbourne Upper School, where I was pleasantly surprised to find a real life farm as part of the school! I saw some amazing art work produced by students at Robert Bloomfield Middle School.

This is my first blog written especially for young people. I write a blog each month which you are all welcome to read, but it is aimed at an adult audience. I hope that you will tell me whether you have found this blog interesting to read and whether you think it would be a good idea for me to write a regular blog for young people. Thank you to Amy, Charlotte and Daytona, from the Children in care Council, who gave me useful feedback on my first attempt!

I am sure you have all experienced starting a new school. It's an exciting time, a chance to make new friends but like any new experience there are nervous feelings too! Starting a new job is a bit like starting a new school. There are a lot of new faces and names to learn! I am very grateful for all the support that everyone has given me since I arrived in Central Bedfordshire council six weeks ago. From my secretary, Annette, who has made sure I get to the right place at the right time, to our head teachers who have kindly invited me to their schools, and all the staff who are so proud of the children they support.

I have two grown up children. My son lives and works in Switzerland, and my daughter is studying for an English degree at Leeds University. My daughter had to spend a considerable amount of time in hospital as she was growing up, so I understand how for some young people there are additional challenges that are part of life. Overcoming these challenges is daily routine for some of you and I am committed to making sure that all children and young people have the best support to help you make the most of your individual talents.

I would like to find out more from you and discover what you are most proud of as a young citizen of Central Bedfordshire. Perhaps you have questions for me or ideas of services you think I should go and visit. Perhaps you would like to tell me more about your experiences growing up here. I am very interested in your views and hope I will meet you when I am visiting schools or at one of our young people's summit which I will be telling you more about next time.

*Sue Harrison*

### Looked after Children and Young Peoples Participation Forward Plan 2015 - 2016

The active involvement of children and young people is a central commitment to the Children and Young People's Plan

Theme	Action Plan	Action by	Timescale	Benefits for young people
<b>Children in Care Council and Participation Groups.</b>	To work with managers and staff from Corporate Parenting Service to support the CiCC for Central Bedfordshire:	M Short (MS)	Ongoing – reviewed quarterly	<p>To have a voice in relation to the planning and delivery of services they receive. Feedback will influence and improve services to looked after children &amp; care leavers.</p> <p>To develop a sense of belonging and shared identity with others who have similar experiences.</p> <p>To develop confidence &amp; raise self esteem.</p> <p>To develop transferable and valuable life skills.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To support the CiCC Monthly Meetings where members work to complete tasks identified in the Children in Care Council Priorities.</li> </ul>	MS	Ongoing– reviewed quarterly	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To organise and support activity based Participation Groups; one for over 16 year olds and one for young people between the ages of 8 and 15 years.</li> </ul>	MS	Ongoing– reviewed quarterly	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To support representatives of the CiCC to meet with workers and young people from the children with disabilities team to ensure their views are heard.</li> </ul>	MS	Ongoing– reviewed quarterly	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To promote the work of the CiCC and recruit more young people to attend the CiCC meetings.</li> </ul>	MS	Ongoing– reviewed quarterly	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To work with &amp; support looked after children and young people in monitoring and reviewing the Pledge for Central Bedfordshire.</li> <li>• To support members of the Children in Care Council to attend the Corporate Parenting Panel and present updates and reports as requested.</li> <li>• To support members of the CiCC in meetings with the Chief Executive, Director of Children’s Services, Assistant Director and Head of Service.</li> <li>• To work with &amp; support the young people involved in the participation groups to draw up agendas and work plans regarding participation and consultations.</li> <li>• To be actively engaged in planning future activity based participation events and the Annual Achievement Awards.</li> <li>• To explore with CiCC members their role in future Ofsted Inspections.</li> </ul>	<p>MS/Edward Wong (EW)</p> <p>MS/EW</p> <p>MS/Richard Carr (RCC)/Sue Harrison (SC)/Gerard Jones (GJ)</p> <p>MS</p> <p>MS/CiCC</p> <p>MS/EW/GJ</p>	<p>Ongoing– reviewed quarterly</p> <p>Ongoing– reviewed quarterly</p> <p>As and when required.</p> <p>Ongoing – reviewed quarterly</p>	<p>Be part of the planning and operational process.</p> <p>To engage with officers and elected members</p> <p>To develop a dialogue with officers that make decisions within the council, providing a voice for all looked after children and care leavers.</p> <p>To have a young person led participation group.</p> <p>CiCC members are aware of their role &amp; participation in an Ofsted Inspection.</p>
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<b>The Pledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To review &amp; update the looked after children &amp; care leavers Pledge in consultation with all young people.</li> </ul>	MS/EW	May 2015	The Pledge has been endorsed by Corporate Parenting Panel & all young people and staff are aware.
<b>Consultation/ Training/ Recruitment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To actively participate in consultation exercises across the service in line with local requirements, regional and National events.</li> <li>Support members of the CiCC to develop a survey to gain feedback on services.</li> <li>To support young people in delivering training for social workers and foster carers.</li> <li>To be part of the induction process for new workers starting with CBC.</li> <li>To support young people to be part of the recruitment process for social workers and foster carers for Central Bedfordshire Council.</li> </ul>	MS/CiCC  MS  MS/GJ  MS/GJ  MS/GJ	Ongoing– reviewed quarterly  Sept 2015  When required  Every 2 weeks	Oversight and responsibility for delivering services  Employment and skill development opportunities for looked after children, building confidence & self esteem and positive contribution to their CV's.
<b>Newsletter</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To support young people in producing a newsletter giving information about the CiCC and participation groups.</li> </ul>	MS	Every month	Keep LAC informed of events and current opportunities.

<b>Leaving Care packs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce a Leaving Care Information Pack/Passport to Independence.</li> </ul>	MS/EW	October 2015	To ensure that young people will have the appropriate information when they enter the care system.
<b>Web-site</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a web site for children and young people in care with which they are actively involved both in the production and ongoing maintenance.</li> </ul>	MS/GJ	Summer 2015	To better enable young people to have the lead in developing the site and improving their own IT skills. Improved participation and consultation through a user-friendly medium for young people.
<b>Engagement in meetings/ networks/ raising participation in CiCC for all looked after children and care leavers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To attend Regional Participation Leads meetings.</li> </ul>	MS	Quarterly	Maintaining the profile of participation work.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To attend SMT to report on activity.</li> </ul>	MS		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend LAC Education working group.</li> </ul>	MS		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To attend joint meeting with looked after children, care leavers and Youth Support.</li> </ul>	MS		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend joint looked after children &amp; care leaver team meetings and other service team meetings as appropriate.</li> </ul>	MS		
<b>Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend relevant external training courses on Participation.</li> </ul>	MS	Ongoing – reviewed quarterly	External training to influence improved participation, better ways of engaging and improving service delivery Young people benefit from personal
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities for developing</li> </ul>	MS		

	an in house course(s) for children and young people in care.			development which will improve the quality of participation.
<b>Policy 'Our approach to Corporate Parenting in Central Bedfordshire Council 2014 – 2017'</b>	Contribute to the implementation of Corporate Parenting Action Plan,	MS	Ongoing – reviewed quarterly	To review and monitor actions taken in consultation with Looked After Children & Care Leavers
<b>Bi-Monthly Challenge Panel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw up terms of reference.</li> <li>• Identify group of young people for panel – equal representation from looked after children &amp; care leavers population.</li> <li>• Group of young people to discuss concerns/issues with the managers of the Corporate Parenting Service</li> </ul>	MS/CiCC  MS/CiCC  MS/CiCC	Through the course of the year.	Young people to influence policy and practice of the Corporate Parenting Service.

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**Central Bedfordshire Council**

**Corporate Parenting Panel**

23 March 2015

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**Report of the Virtual School for Looked After Children**

Advising Officer: Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services  
([sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sue.harrison@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

Lead Officer, Helen Redding, Assistant Director School Improvement  
([helen.redding@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:helen.redding@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)) 0300 300 6057

Contact Officer: Jackie Edwards, Virtual School Head  
([jackie.edwards@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:jackie.edwards@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)) 0300 300 4795

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**Purpose of this report**

This report provides information on the role of the Virtual School and the confirmed outcomes for Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire in the Academic Year 2013/2014.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Panel is asked to:

- Consider this report, the progress made to date and comment on the steps identified to improve outcomes for Looked After Children in the future.

**Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations**

1. It is not planned to present this report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Issues**

**The Virtual School**

2. Councils work in a number of ways to drive improvement 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.
3. 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 their resources;
- d) works with social workers to improve attendance, attainment and progress of Looked After Children;
- e) ensures that Looked After Children who are educated in schools outside of Central Bedfordshire Council receive the right support to achieve the best educational outcomes.
- f) manages the Pupil Premium funding allocated for looked after children including monitoring the effective use and impact of this funding by schools and settings

## **Background**

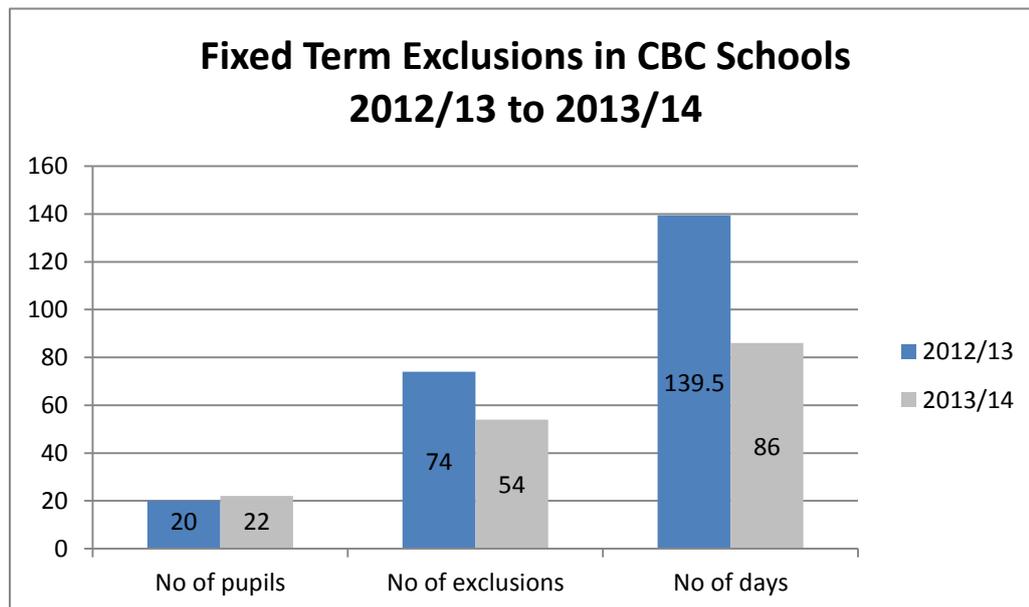
- 4. In September 2014 a permanent head of the Virtual School was appointed to drive improvement in the attainment of looked after children in Central Bedfordshire. This includes working closely with schools and social care services to identify and intervene with those who are at risk of disengagement or under achievement.
- 5. 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 February 2015 the total number of Central Bedfordshire pupils of statutory school age who are part of the Virtual School is 174 (Reception to Year 11). This does not include 41 Y12 and Y13 young people still in care who are being monitored by the Virtual School. This is a significant rise since the last report. 14 attend school/college of which 9 have chosen to continue with the PEP. A new role is being recruited to in order to support this increase.

6. 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 take place termly where appropriate to enable the Virtual School to closely monitor academic progress. This enables appropriate support and challenge with regard to ensuring pupils are making expected or better than expected progress. There is a quality assurance checklist for all PEPs which helps ensure that they are of a consistently high standard.
7. After consultation with schools and other services it was agreed that the PEP would be revised, and it was piloted in the summer term 2014 and rolled out in September 2014. Initial feedback from schools has been very favourable. The Virtual School Educational Advisers are taking a more proactive role in managing this new documentation to bring about more rigour and consistency to the process.
8. In April 2011 the Government introduced the Pupil Premium. The amount increased 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.
9. After consultation with schools and other stakeholders it was agreed that the Virtual School would retain £400 from the £1900 allocated per pupil. The remaining £1500 is given termly to schools to support them in raising educational achievement. There is now a clear application process for schools to request additional funding to support looked after children at risk of disengagement or under-achievement. This allows significant additional support to be allocated to those pupils who need it.

## **Exclusions**

10. There were 2 permanent exclusions during 2013/14. One young person returned to her family during the time of the exclusion, and so ceased to be looked after. The other pupil was in a school in a neighbouring Local Authority. Despite the school being willing to withdraw the permanent exclusion this was not supported by that Local Authority's policy on exclusion. The Virtual School worked 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 2014. This second young person who is still LAC is now settled in a mainstream school.

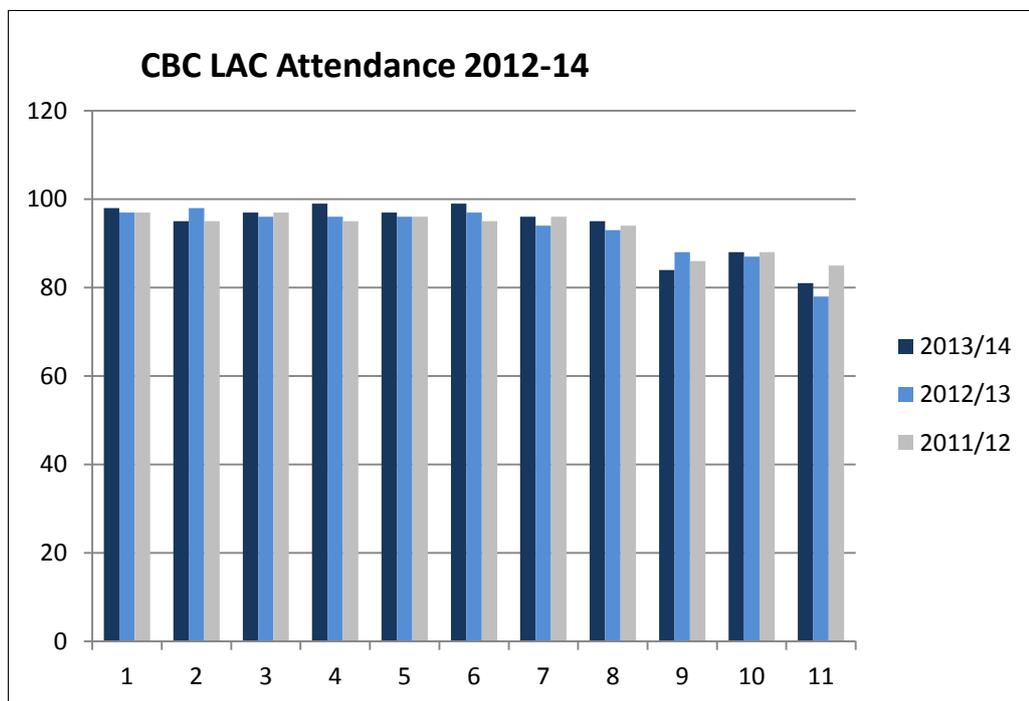
11. Whenever there is the threat of a permanent exclusion the Virtual School will contact the school to explore all the options available including a change of placement. Schools are actively discouraged from permanently excluding Looked After Children, and all other options are explored.
12. There has been 1 permanent exclusion this academic year (September 2014) of a pupil for serious behaviours. The pupil is receiving significant support from a range of specialist agencies and received 40 hours of 1:1 tuition funded by the Virtual School until a place was secured for him at the Academy of Central Bedfordshire.
13. In the Academic Year 2013/14 there were a total of 86 days lost as a result of fixed term exclusions of Looked After Children from schools in Central Bedfordshire and this related to 22 different pupils (see chart below). Days lost to fixed term exclusions have reduced significantly in the last academic year (139.5 days in 2012/13 compared to 86 days in 2013/14). There were 72.5 days lost related to 7 pupils in schools outside of Central Bedfordshire in the academic year 2013/14. 2 pupils contributed 49 days to this total, one of which became a permanent exclusion. Both pupils are now settled in new schools. This is a key priority this academic year. Fixed terms exclusions continue to be addressed as a priority in this academic year as every day of education lost to fixed tem exclusion will impact negatively on outcomes, and can put pressure on a foster placement.



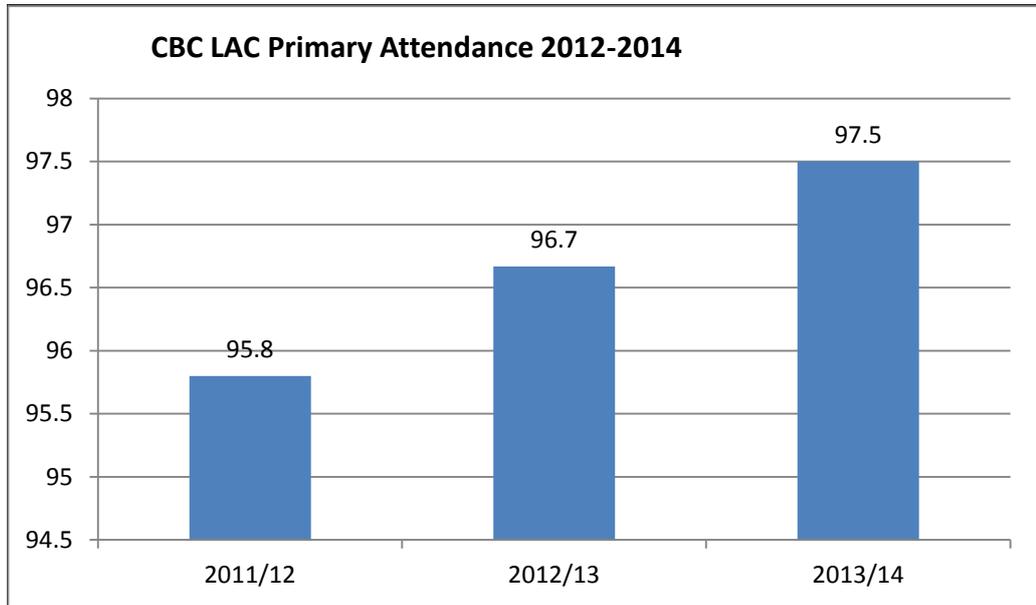
14. The Virtual School is immediately informed by the Inclusion Officer when an exclusion of a LAC occurs. The school are immediately contacted by the Education Adviser to discuss day 1 provision and plan a re-integration meeting to prevent repeat exclusions. 22 pupils had at least one Fixed Term Exclusion, 5 pupils were only excluded once. Exclusions by schools outside of Central Bedfordshire are now being monitored by Welfare Call, enabling the Virtual School to respond as it does with CBC schools.

**Attendance**

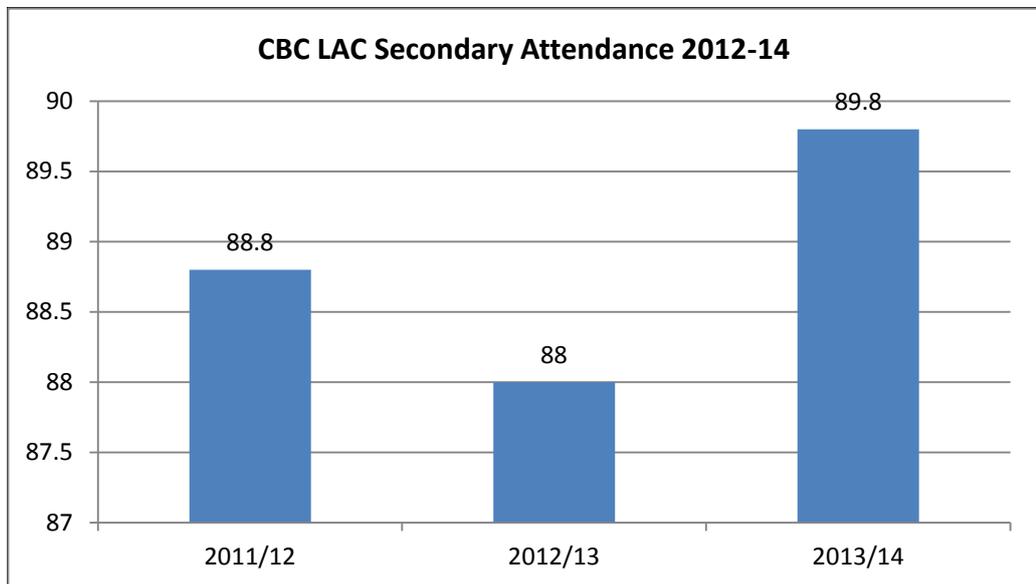
15. Welfare Call is now used as an effective way of monitoring and challenging the absence of Looked After Children. Welfare Call contacts all schools where there is a pupil of statutory school age both in and outside of Central Bedfordshire. If a pupil is absent the carer and/or social worker is contacted to ascertain the reason for absence. This system ensures rigorous procedures are in place for safeguarding, as well as accountability for absence from school. The Virtual School and Social Care Managers receive daily updates regarding pupils who have had periods of absence of more than 3 days. This 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.
16. This system enables the Virtual School to generate attendance data which can be regularly interrogated and shared, and appropriate actions identified immediately to support pupils' improved attendance. As numbers are low in some year groups, this impacts on the percentages.
17. This table illustrates the overall attendance data over 3 years. Attendance in Years 9, 10 and 11 remains the key challenge and therefore key priority. The Virtual School is working with schools and young people to reengage them in learning. Individual tutors are commissioned where needed to ensure access to learning if a pupil is not attending school.



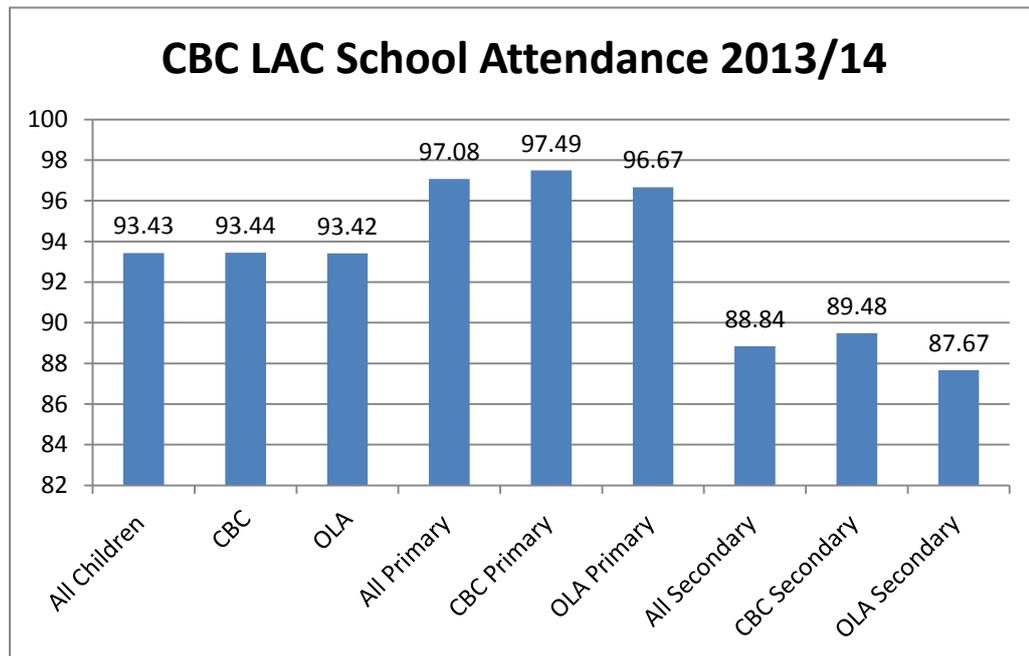
18. This table demonstrates that in the primary year groups overall attendance improved by 0.8%.



19. This table demonstrates that in the secondary year groups, overall attendance has improved by 1.8%.



This table demonstrates that in all phases pupils attending schools in Central Bedfordshire have better attendance



20. Attendance can be low where pupils have moved placement or have spent some time waiting for a school place in other authorities, or where they have had periods on part-time timetables. Currently all pupils where attendance has been identified as a concern are being closely monitored by both the Virtual School and Social Care. 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.
21. 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. There were 3 Year 11 pupils moved in academic year 2013/14. This was as a result of either an irretrievable placement breakdown or concerns about the young person's safety. The Virtual School worked closely with social care to minimise the disruption to the young person's learning for example paying for 1 to 1 tuition for a student who moved out of the area, allowing them to sit her English and maths GCSE.
22. The Virtual School works in partnership with social care colleagues to commission care placements which can maintain school placements whenever possible.

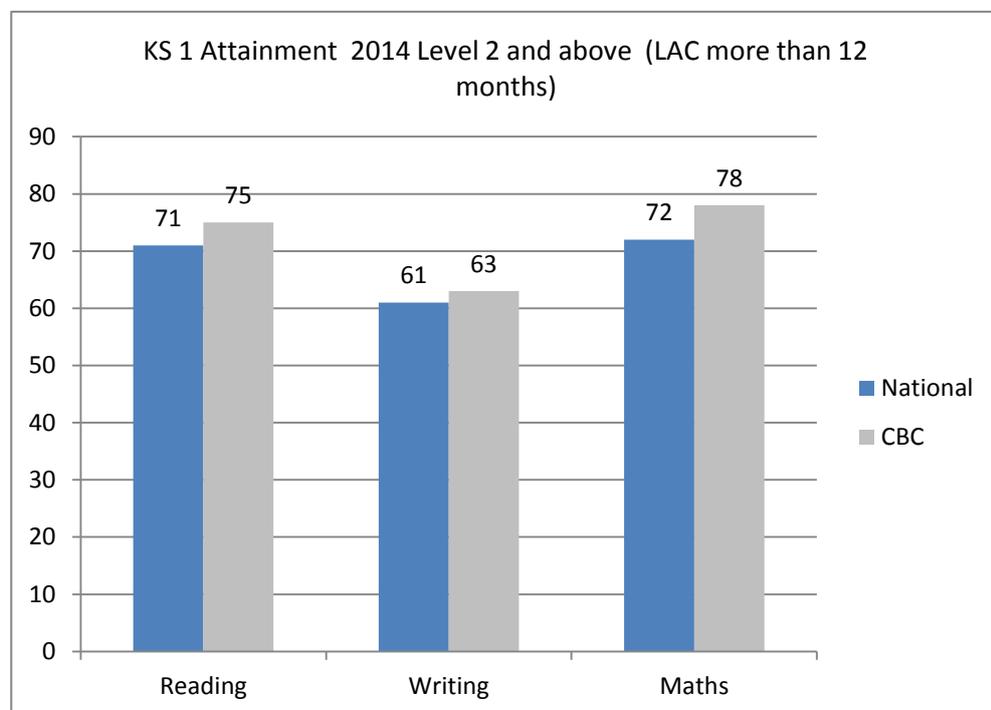
## Pupils' Achievement

23. 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.

### **Key Stage 1 Results 2013/14 (end of year 2)**

24. The national data for the children looked after continuously for 12 months during the year ending 31 March 2014 shows that the percentage of looked after children achieving the expected level (level 2 or above) in reading, writing and mathematics in 2014 was 71 (69) per cent, 61 (61) per cent and 72 (72) per cent respectively (2013 figures in brackets).

### **February 2015 (comparative data of CBC pupils who were in care for more than 12 months on the 31 March 2014)**



25. Key Stage 1

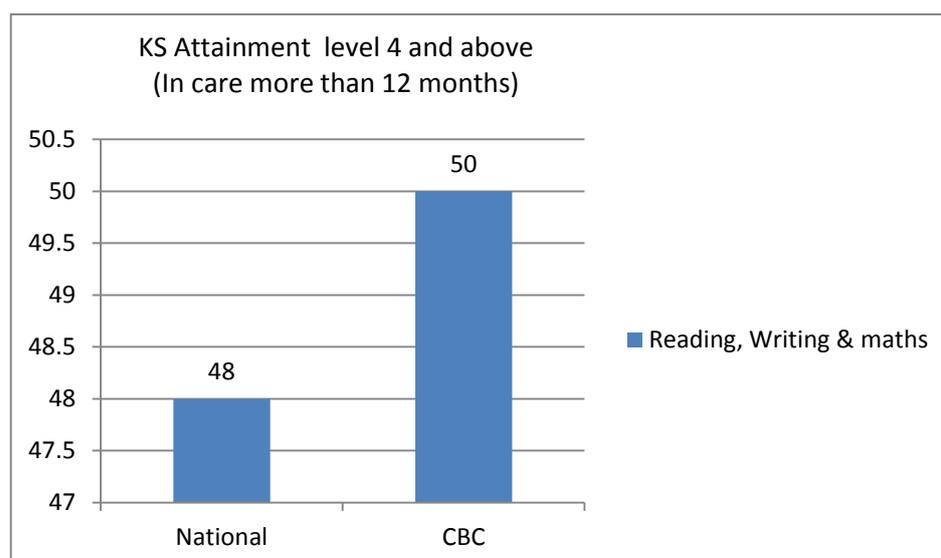
This data is for **all** pupils looked after by Central Bedfordshire, **not only those who have been LAC for over 12 months**. One pupil was educated in Wales and comparative data is not available.

- a. 15 pupils were LAC in July 2014, 4 (27%) of whom have a statement of SEND.
- b. 7 pupils were educated in Central Bedfordshire schools, 8 pupils in other LAs.
- c. Of these 15 pupils, 10 pupils (66%) achieved the expected level (level 2 or above) in reading, 8 pupils (53%) in writing and 12 pupils (80%) in mathematics.
- d. Of the 7 pupils educated in Central Bedfordshire, 4 pupils (57%) achieved the expected level (level 2 or above) in reading, 4 pupils (57%) in writing and 6 pupils (85%) in mathematics. One pupil with a statement of SEND made age expected progress achieving level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- e. Of the 8 pupils educated OLA, 6 pupils (75%) achieved level 2 in reading, 4 pupils (50%) in writing and 6 pupils (75%) in mathematics.

**Key Stage 2 Results 2014**

26. The national data for the children looked after continuously for 12 months during the year ending 31 March 2014 shows that the percentage of looked after children achieving the expected level (level 4 or above) in reading, writing and mathematics in 2014 was 68 (63) per cent, 55 per cent and 61 (69) per cent respectively (2013 figures in brackets)

**February 2105 (comparative data of CBC pupils who were in care for more than 12 months on the 31 March 2014)**

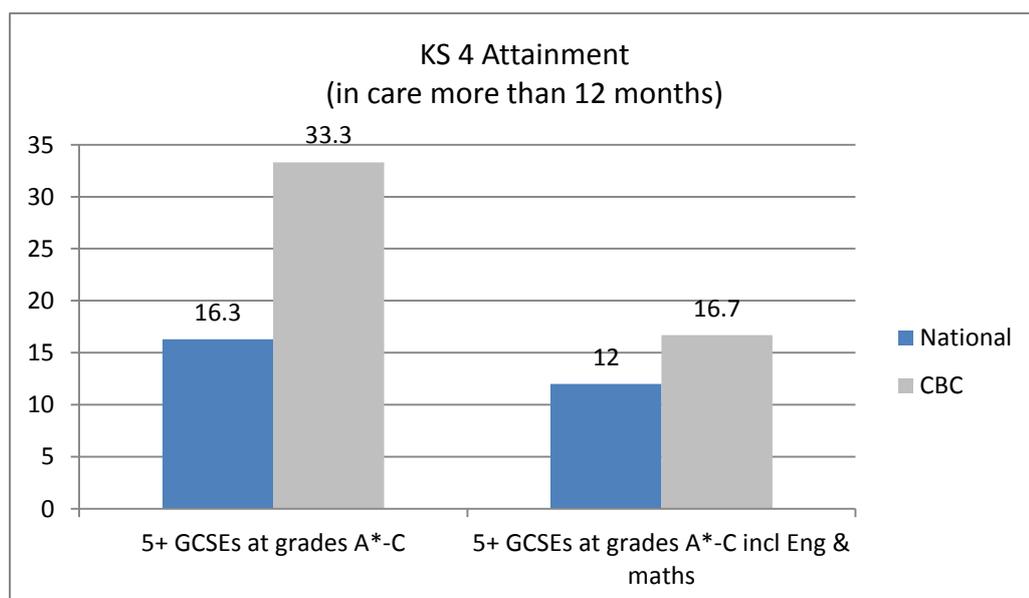


27. This data is for **all** pupils LAC by CBC not only those who have been LAC for over 12 months
- 8 pupils were LAC by CBC in July 2014, 3 pupils (37.5%) have a statement of special educational need. 1 pupil is currently at school action plus.
  - 5 pupils are educated in Central Bedfordshire schools, 3 pupils in other LAs.
  - Of the 8 pupils for whom data is collected, 5 pupils (63%) achieved level 4 or above in reading, 4 pupils (50%) in writing and 5 pupils (63%) in mathematics.
  - Of the 5 pupils educated in Central Bedfordshire schools (3 of whom had identified SEND) 2 pupils (40%) achieved at least level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics.
  - Of the 3 pupils educated in schools OLA, 3 pupils (100%) achieved level 4 in reading, 2 pupils (66%) in writing and 3 pupils (100%) in mathematics.
  - All pupils made expected progress from KS1 and of the 4 pupils without an identified SEND 100% achieved at least level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics

**Key Stage 4 Results 2014**

28. The national data for the children looked after continuously for 12 months during the year ending 31 March 2014 shows that the percentage of looked after children achieving 5+ A\* - C or equivalent in English and mathematics was 12 per cent . However, due to reforms to the educational and assessment systems for KS4 during 2013/14 it is not possible to make comparisons to earlier years.

**February 2105 (comparative data of CBC pupils who were in care for more than 12 months on the 31 March 2014)**



29. This data is for all pupils LAC by CBC not only those who have been LAC for over 12 months.

There were 16 students (two of whom ceased to be LAC in the last 6 months) LAC by CBC in July 2014.

- a. 1 student (6%) achieved 5 A\* - C including English & mathematics
- b. 4 students (25%) achieved 5 A\* - C GCSEs
- c. 11 students (68%) achieved 5 A\* - G at GCSEs.
- d. 13 students (81%) were entered for GCSE examinations
- e. 3 students with identified SEN have achieved a range of nationally accredited vocational qualifications including GCSEs and Functional English and mathematics.
- f. 12 students were educated in Central Bedfordshire, the remaining 4 in schools/settings OLA.
- g. Of the 9 students educated in CBC schools settings
  - 3 students (33%) achieved 5+ A\* - C GCSEs or equivalent
  - 2 students (22%) achieved 5A\* - C at GCSE.
  - 8 students (89%) achieved the equivalent to 5A\* - G at GCSE.
- h. Of the 7 students educated OLA
  - 1 student (25%) achieved 5 A\* - C including English & mathematics
  - 2 students (29%) achieved 5A\* - C at GCSE.
  - 3 students (43%) achieved the equivalent to 5A\* - C at GCSE.
  - 3 students (43%) achieved the equivalent to 5A\* - G at GCSE.

30. Pupils not entered for GCSE.

3 students were not entered for any GCSEs. One was a school refuser; the other 2 had significant issues that led to placement breakdowns and disengagement from learning. All 3 continue to be supported by social care and the Youth Support Service.

### **Governance**

31. The Governing Body is now well established and has met on three occasions. It continues to be well attended and offer appropriate challenge. The current chair will remain in post for this academic year 2014/2015.

### **Priority Actions for 2014/15**

32. 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 have focused on:

- a Ensuring that Looked After Children attend school well, in line with their peers. This will be achieved through:
- The systematic monitoring of attendance data provided by Welfare Call for each pupil, with actions identified to support improved attendance.
  - Follow up any periods of absence from school including multi-professional meetings if the child/young person is at risk of disengagement,
  - Providing schools (both in and out of the LA) with clear guidance on alternatives to fixed term exclusions and part time timetables, and evaluating the impact of that including effective 1:1 tuition.
  - Offering the opportunity for schools to apply for additional funding when a child/young person is at risk of underachieving or disengagement from learning.
  - Supporting all key transition points in the child's education.

February 2015 update

Attendance of LAC is closely monitored with daily reports to the Virtual School and Social Care Managers. Periods of absence of three days are followed up and where appropriate a multi-service response takes place. This may include putting together a part or full time timetable of alternative provision including 1:1 tuition. This resulted in on the 196 pupils monitored in the autumn term 2015 (this includes pupils who had left care in the previous 6 months) 39% had 100% attendance, 49% had above 90% attendance, 12% had less than 90% and 6.7% had less than 85%. This group are closely monitored by both the Virtual School and Social Workers.

All services actively work to prevent mid-term transfers and where they are necessary the Education Advisers and Social Workers work closely together to ensure a smooth transition. Places are only applied to schools which are currently judged good or better by Ofsted at their last inspection. Currently 67% of CBC LAC are placed in good or better schools, only 3 pupils are currently in schools judged as inadequate.

- b Ensuring that Looked After Children are placed promptly in schools when moving council areas.
- Virtual School Head is invited to monthly placement stability meetings
  - Social Workers seek advice from the Virtual School prior to a child/young person moving placement that results in a school move.
  - The Virtual School liaises with other LAs to ensure that the child/young person accesses appropriate educational provision in a timely manner
  - The Virtual School works closely with social care and the Assessment & Monitoring Team (SEND) when a child with a statement

February 2015 update

There are very few cases where CBC LAC are out of school for significant periods of time. The most challenging placements are those pupils moved OLA with statements/Education Health Care plans despite the work done by Education Advisers and Social Workers before the move takes place. As a Local Authority we depend on the SEND services within the placement LA to identify and consult on a school place. This has led to a delay for 2 pupils, and in both cases the Virtual School worked with the Social Worker and the other LA to identify some 1:1 tuition prior to admission to school. A similar picture is seen with non-English speaking asylum seekers of a school age. In two cases recently, an ESOL tutor was identified by the Virtual School for two asylum seekers awaiting a school place.

**Identified further action:**

Ensure asylum seekers have quick access to additional support to learn English and access a school place.

- c Strengthening the school's abilities to meet the needs of Looked After Children. This will be achieved through:
- The challenge provided by Virtual School staff at termly 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.
  - Greater links with the Teaching School to identify tutors and to develop a website

February 2015 update

PEP review meetings being chaired by Education Advisers and schools are now updating section B of the PEP. All PEPs are quality assured by the PEP Co-ordinator who follows up any missing information. The Education Advisers complete a quality assurance document after each meeting. The Virtual School Head samples PEP documentation and follows up with schools if issues are identified.

During PEP reviews schools are expected to report if pupils are making at least expected progress and when not, give reasons why not, and agree actions that will accelerate progress. Progress data is now collected and recorded on a termly basis.

Schools may apply for additional funding when a pupil is at risk of underachievement or disengagement.

The Virtual Head teacher reports termly to the Governing Body on pupil progress, attendance and exclusion.

The training for new designated teachers was attended by 25 teachers in November 2014. A further two networking meetings were held for more experienced designated teachers with 24 attending.

Case studies have been requested from schools where there has been clear evidence of impact of Pupil Premium. This is to be followed up in the summer term.

After further discussions the development of a VS webpage will not take place through the Teaching School. How to take this forward will be discussed at the next governing Body meeting in March.

**Identified further actions:**

- Evaluate the use of the additional pupil premium accessed by schools.
- Discuss with Governing Body how to develop a web site for the Virtual School.
- There to be a web page on the CBC website by June 2015.

d Further improving the quality of PEPs by

- New PEP documentation now being used. Section B (a rolling document) is completed by the school and Section A by the social worker.
- Quality assuring all PEPs (Virtual School staff);
- Sharing good practice through subsequent PEP reviews, CBTSP good practice website and annual training.

February 2015 update

The new section B of the Personal Education Plans has been positively received by schools. There is still a certain amount of inconsistency in the completion of this paper work; however the prompt return of these by schools has improved. Further training will be offered at the next network meeting.

**Identified further actions:**

- Share learning at the summer Designated Teacher meeting on effective PEP meetings and the targeted use of pupil premium

- e Ensuring that schools intervene promptly and effectively if a Looked After Child falls behind their target trajectory by:
- Challenging the designated teacher regarding use of Pupil Premium and other funding to ensure that each pupil is keeping up with or exceeding their expected level of progress;
  - Keeping a Virtual School database that monitors each looked after child's progress and ensures intervention if a child is falling behind their expected rate of progress.

February 2015 update

Current data indicates that the progress at KS1 and KS2 compares favourably with other groups of pupils. The biggest challenge is still KS4 – we are currently monitoring 16 Y11 pupils. This involves monthly meetings between the Virtual School and Social Care Managers. Y11 PEP meetings were a priority in the Autumn term and all pupils have had one meeting since September 2014. 9 of this group have an identified SEN including 6 with statements (EHCPs). 4 pupils are working towards 5 A\* - C at GCSE including English and maths. Currently only 2 pupils are not working towards KS4 accreditation

- f 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.
- Developing greater links with Youth Support to have more rigorous tracking of post-16 students.
  - Monthly meetings to discuss Y11 and Y12 students and identify appropriate intervention for including accessing additional funding.

February 2015 update

Interviews have taken place to appoint a Personal Adviser to work across the Youth Support Service and the Virtual School. A second interview will take place on Wednesday 25 February (UPDATE FOLLOWING INTERVIEWS)

Monthly meetings are taking place to discuss Y12 students to identify and agree additional support where appropriate. This has included support for post-16 asylum seekers to further develop their language skills through access to a 1:1 tutor and funding for alternative pathways.

**Identified further actions:**

- Appoint a personal adviser to work with LAC in year 9, 10. & 11 to raise the achievement of Key Stage 4 pupils in the next 3 years

- g Embedding the role of the governing body, providing appropriate levels of challenge and support.
- Three Governing Body meetings have been held and attendance is very good with representation from a range of stakeholders including schools and carers
  - Virtual School Head meets termly with the Chair of the Governing Body to discuss the development plan.

February 2015 update

Next Governing Body meeting is in March 2015. The Virtual School development plan has been reviewed to include the current priorities including KS4 achievement.

**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.

**Corporate Implications**

**Legal Implications**

33. 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 Virtual School Head became a statutory post in June 2014. The current Virtual School Head was appointed permanently from 1 September 2014. Previously she carried out this role as a Consultant.
34. 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.

**Financial Implications**

35. The Virtual School is fully funded through the Dedicated School Grant (DSG) High Needs Block.

**Equalities Implications**

36. 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.

### **Conclusion**

37. This report provides information on the role of the Virtual School and the confirmed outcomes for Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire in the Academic Year 2013/14. It also identifies the steps the Virtual School is taking in the current Academic Year 2014/15 in partnership with other agencies including schools and social care to raise the achievement and progress of all looked after children.

### **Appendices**

None

### **Background Papers**

None

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