

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** 7 January 2016

## **NOTICE OF MEETING**

### **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**

Date & Time

**Monday, 18 January 2016 at 10.00 a.m.**

Venue at

**Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford**

Richard Carr  
**Chief Executive**

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

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

Cllrs: C Hegley (Chairman), Mrs A L Dodwell (Vice-Chairman), Mrs A Barker, N B Costin, Mrs S A Goodchild, T Stock, M A G Versallion and B Wells

[Named Substitutes:

Cllrs: D Bowater, I Dalgarno, Mrs J Freeman and K Janes]

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

Director of Children's Services

Director of Social Care, Health and Housing (or the Assistant Director Housing or their representative if the Director 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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## 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 9 November 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

Item	Subject	Page Nos.
5.	<b>Report on Refreshment of the Children in Care Council Representation on the Corporate Parenting Panel</b>  To consider a report on the CiCC representation on the Panel.	+ To Follow
6.	<b>Meeting the Housing and Support Needs of Vulnerable Young People</b>  To consider an update to the report titled 'Meeting the Housing and Support Needs of Vulnerable Young People' submitted to the Corporate Parenting Panel in October 2014.	* 13 - 20
7.	<b>Report on Adoption Support Fund</b>  To consider a report setting out the remit of the Adoption Support Fund and how the Council is making use of it.	* 21 - 28
8.	<b>Work Programme</b>  To consider the Panel's work programme.	* 29 - 32

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**CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 9 November 2015

**PRESENT**

**Elected Members (voting)**

Cllrs C Hegley (Chairman)  
Mrs A L Dodwell (Vice-Chairman)  
Mrs A Barker  
N B Costin  
Mrs S A Goodchild  
T Stock  
M A G Versallion

**Officers (voting)**

Mr T Keaveney, Assistant Director Housing Services

**Carers (non-voting)**

Mrs H Philips  
Mr D Thorne

Apologies for Absence: Mrs J Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing  
Cllr B Wells

Officers in Attendance:	Mr N Costin	– Head of Housing Solutions
	Ms J Edwards	– Head of Service Virtual School and Vulnerable Pupils
	Mr G Jones	– Assistant Director Children's Services Operations
	Mr T Keaveney	– Assistant Director Housing Services
	Mr L Manning	– Committee Services Officer
	Miss N Phillips	– Practice Manager Adoption
	Ms M Short	– Participation Officer
	Mr E Wong	– Head of Corporate Parenting

Others in Attendance: Children in Care Council Representative

CPP/15/16. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 21 September 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**CPP/15/17. 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/15/18. Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman reported that she had attended a Local Government Association sponsored development event for lead members, called Children's Services Leadership Essentials, at the weekend.

The Chairman thanked the Participation Officer for arranging for her to meet the Looked After Young Person of the Year prior to the Panel's meeting.

**CPP/15/19. Interim Report - Virtual School for Looked After Children**

The Panel considered a report from the Director of Children's Services which explained the role of the Central Bedfordshire Virtual School and provided the unvalidated educational outcomes for Looked After Children in the academic year 2014/15. The report also identified the measures taken by the Virtual School in the current academic year 2015/16, in partnership with other agencies, to raise the achievement and progress of all Looked After Children.

The Head of Service Virtual School and Vulnerable Pupils provided a brief introduction to the report before seeking queries and comments from Members on its content.

Members welcomed the substantial progress made in Looked After Children's educational attainment and expressed their warm appreciation of the contribution made by the Head of Service Virtual School and Vulnerable Pupils. In reply the Head of Service thanked the Panel for its comments though she stressed that these also applied to her co-workers who had contributed to what was a team effort.

The Head of Service Virtual School and Vulnerable Pupils then responded to a number of comments and queries raised by Members. Such issues included the sourcing of suitable schools for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), national changes to the measurement of pupil outcomes, the challenges arising from unaccompanied asylum seekers and the use of the pupil premium and Personal Education Plans (PEPs) to raise levels of attainment and progress during care.

Discussion also took place with regard to the difficulties which sometimes arose for young people with SEN during their transition into adult social care. A foster carer provided the Panel with an example of such shortcomings and the

negative impact on educational opportunities for the young person concerned. In response the Head of Service Virtual School and Vulnerable Pupils suggested a possible way of overcoming the obstacles which had arisen. She emphasised, however, that such situations should no longer arise due to the introduction of Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans which applied to children and young people up to the age of 25 and which should ensure a seamless transition.

Nonetheless, the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations acknowledged that difficulties could still arise and suggested that a 'spotlight' report be submitted on this issue. The Panel welcomed the Assistant Director's suggestion.

#### **NOTED**

**the progress made to date in improving outcomes for Looked After Children and young people in Central Bedfordshire during the academic year 2016/17 and the impact of the measures taken in the current academic year 2015/16 to do so.**

#### **RESOLVED**

- 1 that a 'spotlight report' on the current process which applies to young people as they move into adult social care and what, if any, action can be taken to improve support for them during this phase of their lives, be submitted to the Panel;**
- 2 that young people be invited to the above meeting of the Panel to talk to Members about their personal experiences in this area.**

#### **CPP/15/20. Agency Report Quarter 2 - Fostering 1 July - 30 September 2015**

The Panel received a report by the Director of Children's Services which outlined activity in the Fostering Service during Quarter 2 (1 July - 30 September 2015).

The report contained updates on various issues including the following:

- Recruitment of Foster Carers
- Assessments
- Referrals/Placement
- Training
- Ofsted Notifications
- Allegations
- Complaints
- Compliments
- Annual Budget
- Reporting to Members – Legal Requirements
- Risk Management
- Staffing

- Conclusion and Next Steps

In addition a copy of the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose dated 1 April 2015 was attached for approval at Appendix A of the report.

The Head of Corporate Parenting introduced the report and highlighted particular items of interest.

Whilst welcoming the way in which the report had been written a Member asked that future reports include information on the number of Looked After Children in the foster care system on a given date within each quarter, whether the children were in short or long term foster care, the proportion of children moving between carers over a particular period and the frequency that this occurred, the number of Special Guardianships and the possibility that children involved could re-enter the care system due to, for example, carer vulnerability such as the age of the family members who had the responsibility for them. In response the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations undertook to review the content of future quarterly foster care reports to the Panel and the submission of fostering information to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee having regard to these comments. The Chairman welcomed this development.

The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations then updated Members on the introduction of more rigorous assessments for Special Guardianships and the tension between the government's wish to encourage adoption and the Children's Court viewpoint that adoption should take place only if no other option was left. The Assistant Director added that the Council's current safeguarding policy was to be reviewed to ensure that children were being protected effectively.

Members then made further comment on the report. The Vice-Chairman sought clarification on the geographical spread of foster carers within Central Bedfordshire and whether carers were coming forward to care for those children with more challenging behaviour. In response the Head of Corporate Parenting explained that he was unsure as to the detailed location of foster carers but he could investigate further. He also stated that foster carers were being encouraged to expand the range of children they were willing to foster in response to the shortage of carers for certain groups such as teenagers.

In conclusion the Chairman referred to the proposed revision to the style and content of future reports and suggested that the reports produced by other local authorities on this subject area could be considered for guidance. She then thanked the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations and his team for their positive achievements in this area.

## **NOTED**

**the content of the Quarter Two report on the Fostering Service for the period July to September June 2015.**



**RESOLVED**

**that the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose dated 1 April 2015, as attached at Appendix A to the report of the Director of Children's Services, be approved and signed by the Executive Member for Children's Services and Director of Children's Services.**

CPP/15/21. **Six Monthly Report in Respect of the Adoption Service - 1 April 2015 to 30 September 2015**

The Panel received a report by the Director of Children's Services which outlined the activity in the adoption service over the six month period from April to September 2015.

The six month update included the following areas:

- Background
- Recruitment of Adopters
- Adoption Planning and Placements for Children
- Adoption Scorecard
- Adoption Support
- Adult Adoption Work
- Key Events

In addition a copy of the Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose dated 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016 was attached for approval at Appendix A of the report.

The Practice Manager Adoption introduced the report following which a Member, whilst welcoming the overall content, raised a number of queries regarding aspects of the adoption process including the status of the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF), whether the process was improving to the benefit of the children concerned and what action was being taken to solve any associated problems. A second Member sought clarification on how unsuccessful applicants to become adopters were notified and whether potential adopters met the culturally diverse needs of the children found within Central Bedfordshire.

The Practice Manager Adoption responded to Members' queries. She stressed that the recruitment process examined the suitability of prospective adopters. In addition advice and guidance was provided by the Adoption Service though she acknowledged that this could be improved.

The Vice-Chairman referred to the use of 'adoption parties' in the United States which had also been used by some local authorities in the United Kingdom and asked if their use for matching hard to place children with adopters had been considered in Central Bedfordshire. In response the Practice Manager Adoption explained that an 'adoption day' had been held and had been successful in placing one child. It had been intended to hold a further 'adoption

day' but it had not proved possible to proceed. The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations stated that there was a cohort of 10 children who had proved hard to place and that placement was more difficult for older children. However, he assured the Panel that placements were made. He raised the possibility of submitting the Adoption Service's activity grid which illustrated the Service's efforts to secure placements.

The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations then advised that BAAF, together with some similar organisations, had failed for financial reasons. However, BAAF's work continued under CoramBAAF, part of the Coram Group of charities. The Assistant Director stressed the complicated nature of the adoption process and suggested that a 'spotlight report' on how it worked and how people became adopters be submitted to the Panel. He then advised the meeting of the government's proposal to form regional adoption agencies to overcome what it saw as inefficiencies within the current adoption system due to the current small size of some existing agencies and a failure by them to share resources with neighbouring authorities. He also stressed that discussions on the proposals were at a very early stage, the outcome was uncertain and that the existing service needed to be kept stable for the benefit of the children. The Head of Corporate Parenting stated that the Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose, which the Panel was being asked to approve, would remain in place until the end of March 2016 or until a Regional Agency assumed operations within that period and introduced its own.

Further, brief, discussion followed.

#### **NOTED**

**the content of the six monthly report on the Adoption Service for the period April to September 2015.**

#### **RESOLVED**

- 1 that the Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose dated 1 April 2015 - 31 March 2016, as attached at Appendix A to the report of the Director of Children's Services, be approved and signed by the Executive Member for Children's Services and Director of Children's Services;**
- 2 that a 'spotlight report' on how the adoption process works and how people become adopters be submitted to the Panel.**

#### **CPP/15/22. Work Programme**

Members considered a report which set out the Panel's work programme for the remainder of the 2015/16 municipal year.

The meeting was aware that additional items had already been added to the work programme (minutes CPP/15/19 and CPP/15/21 above refer).

**RESOLVED**

- 1 that 'spotlight reports' be submitted to the Panel on Looked After Children with disabilities, unaccompanied asylum seekers as Looked After Children, the Virtual School, and the reason and impact of the movement of Looked After Children between different foster carers;**
- 2 that a report be submitted by the foster carer representatives setting out feedback on various issues of their choice from the Central Bedfordshire branch of the Foster Carers Association;**
- 3 that the Adoption Agency statement of Purpose and the Fostering Agency Statement of Purpose scheduled to be submitted to the meeting of the Panel on 18 January 2016 be deleted following their approval at today's meeting;**
- 4 that the Corporate Parenting Operations Group – Improvement Plan Update scheduled to be submitted to the meeting of the Panel on 18 January 2016 be deleted and the Update on Accommodation Provision for Young Persons, which will include information from the deleted Improvement Plan Update report, be submitted to the Panel on that day instead;**
- 5 that an informal meeting session with Looked After Children and young people be arranged to which all Members of the Council are invited;**
- 6 that the Children in Care Council representative be thanked for the newsletter circulated at the meeting which focused on the recent awards ceremony;**
- 7 that Members of the Panel be invited to attend and observe the Children in Care Council (CiCC) monthly meetings once the CiCC membership has stabilised;**
- 8 that details of, and an invitation to, a forthcoming event entitled Corporate Parenting – Taking it to the Next Level, jointly hosted by the National Children's Bureau and A National Voice to be held in London on 21 November 2015, be sent to the Chairman.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.54 a.m.)

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Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Monday, 18 January 2016

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**Meeting the Housing and Support Needs of Vulnerable Young People Update**

Advising Officers: Director of Social Care, Health and Housing  
([julie.ogley@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:julie.ogley@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

Nick Costin, Head of Housing Service  
([nick.costin@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:nick.costin@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

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**Purpose of this report**

1. This report provides an update to the report of 13 October 2014 titled 'Meeting the housing and support needs of vulnerable young people'. The original report affirmed the commitment of the housing service to the Corporate Parenting responsibility and set this in the context of a strategic housing agenda that is fully aligned to that responsibility. This report updates on progress since October 2014, and identifies next steps going forward.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee is asked to:

1. Note progress made since October 2014 towards an improved day to day experience of housing and support services by Care Leavers, and towards improved access to supported accommodation for those Care Leavers that are not ready for independent accommodation at the age of 18
2. Consider the proposed next steps at paragraphs 22 to 27.

**Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations**

1. The item is not planned to go to Overview and Scrutiny.

**Issues**

2. The Corporate Parenting Operations Group (CPOG) was established in September 2014 in order to enable a more co-ordinated approach to the council's responsibilities as a Corporate Parent, across services. Participation in this group has been a high priority for the Head of Housing Solutions, who has attended every meeting to date

3. A report entitled 'Meeting the housing and support needs of vulnerable Young People' was presented to the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) on 13 October 2014. The purpose of this report was to draw attention to particular challenges in relation to housing and support for Care Leavers and other vulnerable Young People; and to identify opportunities for closer collaboration, through the CPOG, in order to improve the council's response to those challenges.
4. The purpose of this report is to update on progress made since September 2014, from a housing perspective and to propose next steps

### **Improving access to Council and Housing Association tenancies**

5. In October 2014, a new Housing Allocations Policy was launched. This policy restricts access to the Housing Register only to those with a social housing need. The new policy explicitly recognises Care Leavers as having a need for social housing.
6. Housing and Corporate Parenting colleagues co-operate to plan a transition into a social housing tenancy for Care Leavers at the point they are ready to leave their care placement and move into their own home. Care Leavers are given help to develop their independent life-skills whilst they are waiting for their own home, and only assisted to bid for properties once they are felt to be able to cope with this step.
7. Most Care Leavers apply to the Housing Register at age 17, and wait in date order in Band 2, with other general needs applicants. However, a Quota Scheme was introduced in November 2014 as an additional route into social housing. The Annual Lettings Plan for 2015-16 gives Corporate Parenting access to 10 one-bed and 4 two/three bed lettings per year for Care Leavers (plus a further 8 lettings that are specifically for Teenage Parents leaving care).
8. This allows Corporate Parenting colleagues to select priority cases for rehousing on their own terms (rather than having to make a case to housing that the Care Leaver in question should have a high priority). The selected applicants are able to bid from Band One with higher priority than most other applicants. This facilitates case working by enabling access to a letting within a predictable time-frame.
9. Corporate Parenting colleagues have used all the quota nominations made available to them since the beginning of the scheme. In order to assist Corporate Parenting colleagues to make best use of the scheme going forward, so that quota nominations are used to best effect to assist with case management, the Housing Solutions Locality Manager has offered to attend Children's Services team meetings in order to feed into operational planning.

10. Where a Care Leaver is barred from the Housing Register due to their conduct, the Housing Service will hold a panel meeting to consider the person's application, with representation from Corporate Parenting. Where access to the register is prohibited, there will be an agreed timetable for reconsideration, and an interim plan to address behavioural barriers to rehousing.
11. Floating support services are available to Care Leavers starting council and Housing Association tenancies, in order to supplement the support provided by the Personal Advisor. Around 10 referrals have been made to the former Bromford Support Service from Children's Services in the first two quarters of 2015-16. This service was taken in house on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015, now known as Gateway Housing Support.

### **Improving access to specialist supported accommodation for vulnerable Young People**

12. The previous report highlighted that some Care Leavers have significant personal challenges that hinder their ability to cope in mainstream housing. For instance, psychological impact of negative life-experiences, vulnerability to peer pressure (particularly if those peers are their main form of support); offending behaviour, and there may be Learning Disabilities and Mental Health needs. These Young People ideally need specialist supported accommodation in order to develop their life skills to the point that independent mainstream accommodation is a good option.
13. Social Care, Health and Housing invests £490 K per annum in supported accommodation services for vulnerable Young People in Central Bedfordshire. In addition, a proportion of support provided by former Bromford Support also assists care leavers. However, it is clear that this accommodation does not cater for all vulnerable homeless Young People in Central Bedfordshire. Services are over-subscribed and some young people needing a highly supported environment (including young people both above and below Adult Social Care eligibility criteria thresholds) are not catered for by any of the local supported accommodation services.
14. Since October 2014, the Head of Housing Solutions has led on work to achieve more provision of supported accommodation for this client group. This includes exploring the development of a foyer in Dunstable, making use of an existing site owned by Aldwyck Housing Association. There have been partnership meetings with all stakeholders, including the Homes and Communities Agency, to discuss requirements, feasibility and funding options. The Head of Housing Solutions is continuing work with Aldwyck to sustain momentum on the project, some of Aldwyck's key stakeholders having left their positions in August 2015.

15. There have been initial discussions with Signposts, in September 2015, to look at expanding their services for Care Leavers at risk of homelessness, potentially with the provision of increased capacity to accommodate and support Young People in shared housing in the Dunstable / Houghton Regis area.
16. Housing Services has facilitated the development of a 'shared house' supported model with Amicus Trust. The model is currently being tested through a pilot project with homeless veterans, with a view to sourcing properties for a similar approach with Care Leavers.
17. The gathering of intelligence around accommodation and support needs for vulnerable Young People is a key driver towards achieving more provision. The Head of Housing Solutions has worked alongside Ben Pearson (Head of Commissioning – Children's Services) to develop use of the Managing Demand toolkit in order to inform our understanding of needs. Information about the needs of vulnerable Young People – in respect of supported accommodation, and mainstream accommodation with support – has been provided to Housing Strategy and Planning colleagues, with the aim of informing decisions about new-build requirements.

#### **Improving operational collaboration**

18. The previous report identified a need to work more collaboratively, to address pathway issues and to promote up-stream intervention rather than crisis intervention, particularly in respect of challenging cases that require creativity, insight and co-ordination across the whole system, in order to find the right solutions.
19. The quota scheme aids improved collaboration and has been instrumental in resolving some challenging cases, by providing a stream-lined path for getting the right person into the right property.
20. Individual challenging cases require close collaboration between front-line managers. The CPOG acts to establish and maintain a culture of joint working and as a mechanism to ensure that the right people participate in those individual case discussions and are empowered to seek creative solutions.
21. Feedback from frontline officers suggests that there has been a tangible cultural shift since early 2014 in the way that Housing Solutions have responded to their role as a Corporate Parent. Front line officers from Corporate Parenting and Housing Solutions have strengthened working relationships; there is a better understanding of each other's role and responsibilities and staff act with a common focus on a good outcome for the Young Person. All Housing Solutions staff have completed E-learning Child Protection training since October 2014, and there has been good progress on working to protocols in respect of Care Leavers.



## Next Steps

22. The most important next step is to continue driving continuous improvement in the way that Housing and Children's Services collaborate and respond to Care Leavers needs, through sustained commitment to the CPOG. We will continue to seek improved day to day experiences of housing and support services for Young People, to understand blockages within the system and look for solutions.
23. We will explore, via discussions at CPOG, whether or not an Improvement Plan is required to drive change in respect of housing and support, and we commit to developing and implementing such a plan if required. This includes a commitment to explore how well the Corporate Parenting role is understood and responded to across all housing and support services.
24. We will continue to gather intelligence about the need for general needs rented accommodation in respect of Young People, and to promote the use of this intelligence to inform plans for future new developments of affordable housing in Central Bedfordshire. An example is the recent research undertaken by Citizens Advice in respect of the pressures in the local private rental market.
25. Social Care Commissioning colleagues held workshops in the summer to inform the commissioning of housing support services in 2016, which involved Children's Services colleagues to help identify priorities for future funding of housing support services. There will be further engagement with colleagues in January 2016 as the detailed specifications are developed.
26. Also of vital importance is to maintain momentum in the achievement of additional supported accommodation in Central Bedfordshire, and the Head of Housing Solutions will continue to support Corporate Parenting managers in "making the case" for additional accommodation through strategic policies, such as the developing Housing Strategy and Development Strategy (Technical Guidance), and through individual initiatives with key partners and stakeholders. It is important that needs are evidenced and presented to ensure new housing growth and Housing Support commissioning can help meet those needs.
27. Housing Services are also collaborating closely with Director of Children's Services to find suitable housing solutions for Syrian refugee families arriving in Central Bedfordshire as part of the Government's allocation plan.

## Council Priorities

28. Improving Education and Skills  
Protecting the vulnerable; improving wellbeing

### **Legal Implications**

29. The Council has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children it looks after regardless of where they live. When a Looked After Child reaches 18 years old they become care leavers. In accordance with the duties outlined in the Leaving Care Act 2000, care leavers are entitled to access local authority housing support.
30. Care Leavers are entitled to apply for a council or Housing Association home via the Housing Register. Care Leavers are explicitly identified in the Central Bedfordshire Allocations Policy as having a need for housing assistance.
31. The Council is expected to accommodate any homeless young person [aged 16-18 year olds] under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 where it is assessed that they are a child in need, whenever it is determined that the young person has nowhere else to reside and there is no appropriate adult to care for them.
32. The Children and Family Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 introduce new duties around assessing and planning for care and support needs.

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

33. Financial costs relating to accommodation for Looked After Children (LAC) up to the age of 18 is funded entirely from the Children's social care budget. For care leavers from the age of 18 the housing costs i.e. rent/council tax, are typically met through housing benefit or personal income (where a person is employed). Housing support services, that are non-statutory, are funded from the General Fund and for council tenants by the Housing Revenue Account.
34. The Council ensures that all young people looked after [16 years -18 years] are accommodated in safe & suitable accommodation.

### **Public Health**

35. Good housing has a positive impact on the physical health and emotional well being of young people.

### **Community Safety**

36. Good housing with appropriate support helps to prevent vulnerable Young People from becoming either victims or perpetrators of crime and anti-social behaviour.

### **Equalities Implications**

37. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. There is no equality impact assessment required for this update report but the Council's Housing Allocations Policy was subject to a thorough equalities impact assessment before approval by Executive in May 2014 and specifically considered the needs of vulnerable young people.
38. All looked after children and care leavers will be offered safe & suitable accommodation appropriate to their needs. Assessments to determine accommodation needs take into account the young person's independence skills, their ethnicity, disability and any other relevant factors.

### **Appendices**

None

### **Background Papers**

None. The report presented to Corporate Parenting Panel on 13 October 2014 can be found on the Council's website.

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**Central Bedfordshire Council**

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**

Monday, 18 January 2016

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**Report on the Adoption Support Fund**

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

Advising Officers:

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

Nickie Phillips, Adoption Practice Manager  
([nickie.phillips@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:nickie.phillips@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

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**Purpose of this report**

1. To inform the Corporate Parenting Panel the remit of the Adoption Support Fund.
2. To explain how Central Bedfordshire are making use of the fund.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to:

1. Note the content of the report
2. Comment on the report

**Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations**

3. This item is not planned to go to Overview & Scrutiny as the report is for the Corporate Parenting Panel.

**Issues**

Background

4. On 24 December 2013, the Government announced new resources to help would-be adopters find a child to adopt along with more money for councils. Included in this announcement was an Adoption Support Fund to be set up to improve the support available to adoptive families.

## Adoption Support Fund

5. The Adoption Support Fund was set up by the Department for Education to provide funding to extend adoptive families access to therapy.
6. There was considerable variation in the services and resources provided between local authorities. Some authorities were able to provide some therapy within their service, such as Theraplay, and some had access to specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) whereas others were only able to access mainstream CAMH services where families often did not meet the criteria for a service from the CAMH service.
7. Adoption Regulations are clear that local authorities should provide the following under adoption support services:
  - Information, advice, guidance and signposting
  - Counselling
  - Opportunities for adoptive parents to interact (e.g. support groups, family days)
  - Mediation of contact with birth families
  - Mediation services when an adoptive family is at risk of disruption
  - Financial support
  - Basic Life story work
  - Short break care where no therapeutic input is provided
8. Additional identified services, such as an identified therapeutic service, are a discretionary provision where the local authority can decide whether or not to provide the service.
9. The prototype for the Adoption Support Fund was tested in ten local authorities between June 2014 and May 2015 and was used to refine key features and operating procedures of the Adoption Support Fund.
10. Following assessment of a families needs, local authorities can apply to the Adoption Support Fund for funding for therapy. The therapy could be provided by the Local Authority adoption support service, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), other public sector services, or by an independent sector provider.

11. From 01 May 2015 £19.3 million was made available nationally to fund the first year and became accessible to 152 local authorities to submit applications for funding through an online portal. Each application is considered on a case by case basis.

#### Aims of the Adoption Support Fund

12. The Adoption Reform recognised that many adopted children have experienced difficult and traumatic care before being placed for adoption, which can prevent them from settling into their new home and can create difficulties at particular stages such as adolescence.

13. The National picture shows that:

- 72% of children adopted in 2013-14 entered care due to neglect or abuse
- Around 3% of adoptions disrupt
- 25% of parents report major challenges and a further 33% describe life as generally good with some challenge
- Parents report high levels of child to parent violence and other challenging behaviours. High incidence of mental health needs in clinical range, but also below thresholds in many other areas
- Educational attainment is higher than LAC but lower than non adopted

14. Support paid for by the Adoption Support Fund will be identified by suitability to achieve positive outcomes for the child and family. Outcomes include:

- Improved relationships with peers
- Improved relationships with siblings, parents and other family
- Improved relationships with teachers and school staff
- Improved engagement with learning
- Improved emotional regulation
- Improved behaviour management
- Improved confidence

- Improved ability to enjoy a positive family life and social relationships
- Reduced child on parent violence

#### Central Bedfordshire

15. In addition to the support offered to families on an annual basis we are, as of 30 November 2015, offering intensive adoption support to seventeen families with a total of twenty children. These families have an Adoption Support assessment completed to identify the support required. On most occasions support can be provided by the Adoption Agency via an allocated Social Worker or by signposting to other services.

16. Six of these families have been identified as requiring a therapeutic service or assessment and applications to the fund have been completed and agreed. These families are currently receiving therapeutic services from external providers from the independent sector.

Four examples of the identified need and funding include:

- 1 young person, female aged 16 years, receiving one to one sessions with an accredited counsellor completing therapeutic life story work. Amount agreed £2,155.60
- 1 family - two parents and twin boys aged 14 years, receiving Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy. This family has complex relationship difficulties and the young people are involved with several services such as Family Support, Youth Offending and education. Amount agreed £4,000.00 for initial assessment plus £11,050.00 for the therapy.
- 1 family - two parents and two children aged 5 years and 9 years, currently having an assessment for therapeutic needs due to complex attachment issues within the family dynamics. Amount agreed £4,000.00.
- This assessment is likely to lead to a plan of therapeutic intervention where a 'top up' from the fund will be applied for.



- 1 young person, male aged 10 years, currently undergoing a therapeutic assessment with an independent accredited therapist following concerns regarding his mental wellbeing. Amount agreed £2,000.00. This assessment is likely to lead to a plan of therapeutic intervention where a 'top up' from the fund will be applied for.

17. To date the six families who have benefited from the fund, to the value of £29,396.26, have received a therapeutic intervention which has sustained the placement and reduced the risk of a family disruption.

18. A further four families have been assessed as requiring a therapeutic intervention and applications are being completed at present.

### **Options for consideration**

19. None

### **Reason/s for decision**

20. Not applicable

### **Reason for urgency**

21. Not applicable

### **Council Priorities**

22. Making effective use of the Adoption Support Fund ensures that we are able to provide a service that protects the vulnerable and improves the wellbeing of each individual within the family.

In addition it enables us to provide a more efficient and responsive service to adoptive families who require specialist therapeutic support to meet their needs.

### **Corporate Implications**

23. None

### **Legal Implications**

24. None

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

25. The Government has extended the Adoption Support Fund for another year to 31 March 2017.

### **Equalities Implications**

26. Adoption services provided affect all sectors of communities.

### **Implications for Work Programming**

27. Not applicable

### **Conclusion and next Steps**

28. The fund has enabled us to provide responsive and intensive therapeutic services for adoptive families where universal support services are insufficient to address the needs of the family. This has reduced the risk of disruption in each family and assisted Central Bedfordshire to provide a responsive service.

Central Bedfordshire Adoption agency are in the process of sending service user feedback forms to those families who have accessed a service funded by the Adoption Support Fund to inform the local offer of adoption support to adoptive families for 2016-2017. To date we have verbally received feedback from adoptive parents who are positive about the service being provided.

Each family have an allocated Social Worker who works closely with the family, therapy provider and school. The therapeutic service provided is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it is meeting the needs of the child. Once the identified therapy has been completed the provider produces a report as a record of the work completed. To date work has yet to be completed with a family to enable us to conclude on the measured outcomes. This will be measured based on family, school stability and feedback from the family and young people.

For other families we have included information about the fund in our newsletter and within the Guide for Adoption Support leaflet which can be downloaded on Central Bedfordshire Website.

The risk of adoption disruption increases in adolescence, so to minimise the risk we are planning to develop a young peoples group for children aged 10 years in 2016 with the aim to offer a regular group activity with a learning development theme for each group session i.e. identity, healthy relationships, contact etc. Once the programme is defined we will complete an application to the Adoption Support Fund for funding.

**Appendices**

None

**Background Papers**

None

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**Central Bedfordshire Council**

**CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**

Monday, 18 January 2016

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**Work Programme**

Advising Officers:

Mel Peaston, Committee Services Manager  
([mel.peaston@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:mel.peaston@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

Leslie Manning, Committee Services Officer  
([leslie.manning@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:leslie.manning@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

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**Purpose of this report**

The purpose of this report is to assist the Corporate Parenting Panel in discharging its responsibilities by providing a proposed work programme for consideration.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Panel considers the proposed work programme attached at Appendix A.

1. To assist the Corporate Parenting Panel a work programme is attached at Appendix A to this report. The work programme contains the known agenda items that the Panel will need to consider.
2. Additional items will be identified as the municipal year progresses. The work programme is therefore subject to change.
3. A revised copy of the Looked after Children and Young People's Participation Forward Plan will be presented to the next meeting of the Panel.

**Council Priorities**

4. The activities of the Corporate Parenting Panel are crucial to ensuring that the Council effectively discharges its role as Corporate Parent of Looked After Children. By considering, approving and following its work programme the Panel helps support the Council's priorities of providing improving education and skills, protecting the vulnerable; improving wellbeing and being a more efficient and responsive Council.

### **Corporate Implications**

### **Legal Implications**

5. There are no legal implications.

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

6. There are no financial and risk implications.

### **Equalities Implications**

7. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
8. Report authors will be encouraged to work with the Corporate Policy Advisor (Equality & Diversity) in order to ensure that relevant equality implications are identified.

### **Conclusion and next Steps**

9. This report will assist the Corporate Parenting Panel in discharging its responsibilities. Any amendments approved by the Panel will be incorporated in the work programme.

### **Appendices**

The following Appendix is attached:

Appendix A – Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme

### **Background Papers**

None

Appendix A

**Corporate Parenting Panel Work Programme**

<b>2015/16 Municipal Year</b>	
6 July 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fees and Allowances for Foster Carers (MG)</li> <li>• Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2014/15 (IW)</li> <li>• Fostering Agency Q4 Performance Report (AC)</li> <li>• Fostering Agency Annual Report 2014/15 (AC)</li> <li>• Adoption Agency Annual Report 2014/15 (NP)</li> <li>• Work Programme (LM)</li> </ul>
21 September 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CiCC Presentation (MS)</li> <li>• LAC Annual (Health) Report (NHS – Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group)</li> <li>• Fostering Service Q1 Report (AC)</li> <li>• Work Programme (LM)</li> </ul>
9 November 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fostering Service Q2 Report (AC)</li> <li>• Adoption Agency Interim Report (NP)</li> <li>• Virtual School for LAC Interim Report (JE)</li> <li>• Work Programme (inc CiCC Forward Plan) (LM)</li> </ul>
18 January 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption Fund (NP)</li> <li>• Refreshment of the CiCC Representation on the Panel – Update (MS/CiCC)</li> <li>• Update on Accommodation Provision for Young Persons (NC)</li> <li>• Work Programme (LM)</li> </ul>
14 March 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CiCC Annual Report 2015/16/Presentation (MS/CiCC)</li> <li>• Fostering Service Q3 Report (AC)</li> <li>• Virtual School for LAC Annual Report (JE)</li> <li>• Corporate Parenting Action Plan – Annual Review (EW)</li> <li>• LAC Health Report – Six Monthly Update (NHS – Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group)</li> <li>• Work Programme (LM)</li> </ul>
9 May 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work Programme (inc CiCC Forward Plan) (LM)</li> <li>• Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose, Fostering Agency Statement of Purpose (EW)</li> </ul>

Unscheduled reports:

- Options for the funding of long term family care (GJ)
- Challenges experienced with the adoption process – discussion with carers (GJ)
- The appointment of a lay member/parent and the appointment of a substitute elected Member to the Joint Adoption Panel (author to be determined)
- Video presentation on the work of the CiCC (GJ)

Appendix A

- Foster care leavers be invited to attend and describe their experiences in care and raise any issues (GJ)
- Looked After Children's Health Care Provision 'Deep Dive' Report (by March 2016) (GJ)
- 'Spotlight Report' on the current process which applies to young people as they move into adult social care and what additional action can be taken to improve support for them during this phase (young people to be invited to attend and talk about their experiences) (GJ)
- 'Spotlight Report' on how the adoption process works and how people become adopters (GJ)
- 'Spotlight Reports' on the following issues:
  - a. LAC with disabilities
  - b. Unaccompanied asylum seekers as LAC
  - c. The Virtual School
  - d. The reason for, and the impact of, the movement of LAC between different foster carers (authors to be determined)
- A report by the foster carer representatives (Central Bedfordshire branch of the FCA) setting out feedback on various issues of their choice
- Corporate Apprenticeship Scheme and LAC (EW)