

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 15, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford on Monday, 5 September 2016

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

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

Officers (voting)

Mr H Griffin, Active Lifestyles Manager
Mrs J Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Apologies for Absence: Mr P Albon, Carer
Cllr N B Costin
Mrs J Dickinson, Assistant Director Leisure, Libraries and
Countryside
Mrs S Harrison, Director of Children's Services
Mr D Thorne, Carer

Members in Attendance: Cllr Mrs D B Gurney

Officers in Attendance:	Ms A Craig	– Practice Manager, Fostering
	Ms G Farmer	– Adoption Panel Advisor
	Mr G Jones	– Assistant Director Children's Services Operations
	Mr L Manning	– Committee Services Officer
	Miss N Phillips	– Practice Manager, Adoption
	Ms M Short	– Participation Officer, Professional Standards
	Mr E Wong	– Head of Corporate Parenting

Others in Attendance:	Ambassadors	– for Children in Care Council
	Representatives	– Children in Care Council
	Mrs T McDonald	– Designated Nurse, Looked After Children (NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group)

CPP/16/9. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

Minute CPP/16/5 – Agency Report Quarter 4 – Fostering 1 January-31 March 2016

Amend the first sentence of paragraph six by deleting the words 'and the reasons for' and inserting in their place the words 'which would indicate if there was a'.

CPP/16/10. **Members' Interests**

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

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

CPP/16/11. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman advised the meeting that she and the Vice-Chairman had attended the opening of the care leavers' hub at the Parkside Family Centre in Houghton Regis. A Member commented that she had also attended the opening and expressed the view that the hub complimented the other services available in the building as well as providing a sense of purpose. The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations then commended the work undertaken on the hub project by the Head of Corporate Parenting and his team. He stressed that that there had been no additional accommodation cost incurred by the Council because the hub was based in the Family Centre. The Assistant Director added that the hub's location in Houghton Regis was highly accessible care leavers in the south of Central Bedfordshire, in contrast to the existing hub which was based to the north in Bedford, and represented the ideal location for possible service expansion in the future.

The Chairman then referred to the forthcoming Children in Care Council awards in October and the possibility of obtaining sponsorship. She acknowledged that there was probably insufficient time to involve sponsors in these awards though she had emailed all Central Bedfordshire Councillors seeking their assistance and some form of contribution.

CPP/16/12. **Central Bedfordshire Council Looked After Children Annual Report - 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016**

The Panel considered a report from the Director of Nursing and Quality NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) which described the achievements, progress and challenges in meeting the health needs of Central

Bedfordshire's children and young people in care during the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

The Designated Nurse for Looked After Children introduced the Annual Report. She worked through the report highlighting particular issues for Members' information. However, the Chairman expressed concern that the report focused on the health care process and failed to provide information on what the health of the Looked After Children and young people was actually like. The Designated Nurse assured the meeting that most of the children and young people were in good physical health although, from the results of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs), it was apparent that some were experiencing emotional difficulties. Discussion followed on this issue during the meeting was advised that some children, including some unaccompanied asylum seeker children (UASC), had undergone traumatic experiences and the Head of Corporate Parenting explained that this had led to the distortion of the average score. The SDQ results therefore needed to be 'unpicked' to be fully understood. However, further Member comment followed during which it was commented that the number of unhappy children within Central Bedfordshire had been increasing before the growth of UASC. The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations explained that the growth could be due to a number of reasons and, whilst emphasising that the figures were not far from Central Bedfordshire's statistical neighbours, acknowledged that there was an underlying issue. He suggested that a 'deep dive' session be held which would include the experiences of individuals so Members would gain an insight into the scale of the matter.

Further discussion followed during which Members sought clarification and sought views on a number of points including the absence of GP representation at the Corporate Parenting Panel. In response the Designated Nurse first explained that all GPs operated on the same system and were aware through electronic means as to whether or not a child was a Looked After Child. The exception was an out of area Looked After Child where it was the child's social worker's responsibility to notify the GP. She added that all services, including GPs, attended operational group meetings and so were fully briefed.

Consideration was given to health assessments for out of County placements, and the delays experienced. The Designated Nurse explained the reasons for this and the measures taken to speed up the process, the success of which would hopefully be reflected in the next Annual Report.

NOTED

the Looked After Children Annual Health Report for 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

RESOLVED

- 1 that a 'deep dive' session on Looked After Children's and young people's health care provision with a particular focus on the issues arising from the results of the Strength and Difficulties**

Questionnaires be held at the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel on 14 November 2016;

- 2 that Looked After Children (LAC) nurses and representatives of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) be invited to attend the deep dive session.**

CPP/16/13. Fostering Agency Report - Quarter 1 (1 April - 30 June 2016)

The Panel considered the report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing which outlined activity in the Fostering Service during Quarter One (1 April to 30 June 2016).

The report contained updates on various issues including the following:

- Recruitment of Foster Carers
- Assessments
- Referrals/Placements
- Special Guardianship Orders
- Training
- Ofsted Notifications
- Allegations
- Complaints
- Compliments
- Staffing
- Conclusion and Next Steps

The Practice Manager, Fostering introduced the report drawing Members' attention to items of note. In response Members raised a number of queries relating to various matters in the report including the Council's responsibility and duty towards unaccompanied asylum seeker children (UASC). The Practice Manager Fostering outlined the action taken to protect UASC including measures to help prevent trafficking and exploitation. Another Member queried what countries the UASC originated from and the level of support offered to foster carers. In response the Practice Manager Fostering stated that the children were from Iran, Iraq and Eritrea. There were none from Syria. Resource packs providing background information on the children were provided to the foster carers

A Member queried what would happen if any fostering households failed to complete their mandatory training. In reply the Practice Manager Fostering stated that such households would receive encouragement to do so. For example if training was completed to the required standard, the household would be rewarded through the fee structure. She stated that there were no fostering households who had refused to undertake the training. The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations stated that most of the challenges in this area were generated by those foster carers who were also family members.

In response to a query by a Member regarding the introduction of a national cap on Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations stated that the government was to hold a review of foster care and the possibility that, as already occurred in Scotland, IFAs in England and Wales would not be permitted to make a profit. If this restriction were introduced it would represent a major change especially given that some IFAs were owned by American banks. However, the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations added that this Council, as others, could not provide special care to all of the Looked After Children and young people who required it so the government might wish to consider retaining at least some IFAs. Further IFAs provided a useful pool from which the Council could recruit foster carers and a major decline in the number of IFAs could impact adversely on the total number of carers.

NOTED

the content of the Quarter One report on the Fostering Service for the period April to June 2016.

CPP/16/14. **Chairman of Adoption Panel - Annual Report**

The Panel considered the 2015/16 Overview Report of the Chair of the Joint Adoption Panel. The report was introduced by the Adoption Panel Advisor who worked through the report and highlighted points of particular interest including the resignation of three Panel members following the introduction of a new fee structure and the rolling out of 'paperless' Panels through the introduction of iPads for Panel members over September and October.

NOTED

the 2015/16 Overview Report of the Chair of the Joint Adoption Panel.

CPP/16/15. **The Pledge**

RESOLVED

that this item be deferred to allow its consideration in conjunction with agenda item 11.

(Note: Minute CPP/16/17 below also refers).

CPP/16/16. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

RESOLVED

that in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that consideration of the item is likely to

involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

CPP/16/17. **Children in Care Council Presentation and the Pledge**

(Note: Prior to consideration of this item representatives from the Children in Care Council (CiCC) joined the CiCC Ambassadors already present at the meeting).

At the request of the Chairman all attendees introduced themselves. Consideration was then given to the draft, updated Pledge which set out the Council's promise, as Corporate Parents, to help children in care to remain healthy, safe and happy and to have high aspirations. The Panel noted that the CiCC had led on the revisions to the document.

The CiCC Ambassadors introduced the Pledge and explained the process by which it had been revised and the contribution made by young people. The CiCC representatives then referred to parts of the Pledge and explained how the parts selected were of personal relevance and importance to them individually.

Discussion followed during which the Panel considered how the Council as a Corporate Parent could achieve its promise in the Pledge and assist young people in their goals. Members of the Panel also emphasised how they wished to become involved individually. The Chairman suggested that a list of issues that young people wished to explore be drawn up and the Council would try to help these take place. An immediate response was the offer of various work experience opportunities by the Director of Social Care, Health and Housing. The Chairman commented that by expanding the network of providers then a greater number and range of opportunities could be offered.

A Member of the Panel referred to that section of the Pledge on 'Future Aspirations' which dealt with leaving care. He referred to the useful guidance given to care leavers on the transition from foster home to independent living, which had been provided by a workshop organised to look at the Passport to Independence, and expressed the wish to see it held again. A CiCC Ambassador also commented on the value of the workshop's advice.

The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations thanked the CiCC and its Ambassadors for the work they had carried out on the Pledge. The Participation Officer, Professional Standards informed the Panel that a version of the Pledge for younger children in care would be developed.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the wording used in the draft, updated Pledge submitted to the Corporate Parenting Panel be approved for signing off subject to inserting the definition of 'Corporate Parenting';**

- 2 **that the Participation Officer, Professional Standards draw up a list of Looked After Children and young people and the experiences that they have requested;**
- 3 **that the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations develop a system by which arrangements can be made for matching Looked After Children and young people with those individuals or organisations able to provide the experiences that they have requested.**

(Note: At the conclusion of this item the Panel moved back into public session).

CPP/16/18. **Work Programme**

Members considered a report which set out the Panel's proposed work programme for the whole of the municipal year for 2016/17.

The meeting was aware that it had already been resolved to add a 'deep dive' session on the emotional wellbeing of children and young people in care (minute CPP/16/12 above refers) to the meeting scheduled for 14 November 2016. The Designated Nurse for Looked After Children stated that she would not be able to attend that meeting but she would liaise with LAC nurses and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS) representatives to encourage their attendance.

The Panel was aware that the Pledge would require an update.

RESOLVED

that the Corporate Parenting Panel work programme for the municipal year 2016/17, as attached at Appendix A of the report of the Committee Services Manager and Committee Services Officer, be approved subject to the addition of the following items:

- **14 November 2016 – 'Deep Dive' Session on the Emotional Wellbeing of Children and Young People in Care (GJ/TMcD)**
- **16 January 2017 – Update on the Pledge (MS).**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.21 p.m.)