

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** 25 August 2016

## **NOTICE OF MEETING**

### **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**

Date & Time

**Monday, 5 September 2016 at 10.00 a.m.**

Venue at

**Room 15, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford**

Richard Carr  
**Chief Executive**

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

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

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

[Named Substitutes:

Cllrs R D Berry, D Bowater, Mrs D B Gurney and G Tubb]

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

Director of Children's Services  
Director of Social Care, Health and Housing (or the Assistant Director  
Housing Services or their representative if the Director is unable to attend)  
Assistant Director Leisure, Libraries and Countryside (or their representative if  
the Assistant Director 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.

2. **Minutes**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 4 July 2016 (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>Central Bedfordshire Council Looked After Children Annual Report - 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016</b><br><br>To consider a report describing the achievements, progress and challenges of the Looked After Children health service 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. | + To Follow      |
| 6.          | <b>Fostering Agency Report - Quarter 1 (1 April - 30 June 2016)</b><br><br>To consider a report outlining the activity in the Fostering Service during Quarter 1.   | * 13 - 20        |
| 7.          | <b>Chairman of Adoption Panel - Annual Report</b><br><br>To consider the Annual Report by the Chair of the Adoption Panel for the period 1 April 2015-31 March 2016.  | + To Follow      |

8. **The Pledge** \* 21 - 22

To receive the draft, updated Pledge and, under item 11 below, seek the Panel's views on the wording of the document. The Pledge sets out the Council's promise to help children in care remain healthy, safe, happy and to have high aspirations, and work on its revision has been led by the Children in Care Council.

9. **Work Programme** \* 23 - 26

To consider the Panel's work programme.

10. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

To consider whether to pass a resolution under section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the Press and Public from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that the consideration of the item is likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

**Exempt Item**

<i>Item</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Exempt Para.</i>	<i>Page Nos.</i>
11.	<b>Children in Care Council Presentation and the Pledge</b>	* 2	

To receive a presentation on various matters from the Children in Care Council and to consider the draft, updated version of the Pledge with the aim of approving the wording of the latter in order to enable its signing off at a later date.

(Note: A copy of the draft update of the Pledge is attached at item 8).

**CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 15, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford on Monday, 4 July 2016

**PRESENT**

**Elected Members (voting)**

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

**Officers (voting)**

Mr T Keaveney, Assistant Director Housing Services

**Carers (non-voting)**

Mr P Albon  
Mr D Thorne

Apologies for Absence: Mrs S Harrison, Director of Children's Services  
Mrs J Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Officers in Attendance:	Ms R Coals	– Principal Social Worker and Head of Professional Standards
	Ms A Craig	– Practice Manager, Fostering
	Mr G Jones	– Assistant Director Children's Services Operations
	Ms S Keenan	– Practice Manager, Conference and Review Service
	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 and Care Council

CPP/16/1. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

**Present – Elected Members (voting)**

Add Councillors N B Costin and B Wells to the list of those Members present at the meeting.

**CPP/16/2. 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/16/3. Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

Further to her announcement to the last Corporate Parenting Panel (minute CPP/15/41 refers) regarding the new activities or experiences for Looked After Children and young people the Chairman updated Members on some of the activities which had taken place.

The Chairman next referred to one of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) Ambassadors present and the Ambassador's contribution to the recent 'Cheering Volunteering' event when she sang. Members were then advised of the Ambassador's other accomplishments and the Panel expressed its congratulations on her achievements.

Last, and in connection with the 'Cheering Volunteering' event, the Chairman expressed her thanks to the staff for their work and encouragement and asked that this be passed on to them.

**CPP/16/4. Independent Reviewing Officers' Annual Report 2015/16**

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Children's Services on the Independent Reviewing Officers' Annual Report for the period April 2015 to March 2016. Members noted that the Independent Reviewing Officers' (IRO's) Manager had a statutory responsibility for the production of an Annual Report for consideration by members of the Corporate Parenting Panel. To this end a copy of the Annual Report was attached at Appendix A to the Director of Children's Services report.

The Practice Manager Conference and Review Service introduced the Annual Report and highlighted matters of particular interest. In response Members raised a number of wide ranging questions and comments with regard to the report and the quality of service provided to Looked After Children and young people.

In reply to various queries on accommodation provision the Head of Corporate Parenting stated that no Looked After Children were housed in temporary accommodation and only some 16-17 year olds were placed in supported

accommodation. The Assistant Director Housing Services explained that, further to a previous discussion on the introduction of 'foyer' style accommodation (minute CPP/15/27 refers), this type of housing was, currently, a Council goal. Although agreement had been reached to acquire properties to form local, sustainable, hubs for supported housing the staffing arrangements for these hubs had yet to be approved.

A Member asked that his appreciation of the work undertaken by the Practice Manager, Conference and Review Service, the Head of Corporate Parenting, the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations and other officers be recorded. He reminded the Panel of the achievements made with regard to Looked After Children and young people when compared to the situation five years ago and, specifically, the challenges in this area which had been inherited from the former County Council. The Member went on to refer to the current case loads undertaken by social workers coupled with an increasing level of demand. He believed that, as a result, some of the more discrete aspects of social work with regard to Looked After Children and young people were not being undertaken. In response the Practice Manager, Conference and Review Service assured the meeting that regular meetings were held to monitor developments and efforts made to ensure that statutory requirements and the needs of the most vulnerable were met. However, she acknowledged that the undertaking of some less urgent work had been delayed because of work pressures.

In connection with the increasing demand on social workers the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations referred to the significant rise in the Children in Care population, largely arising from a substantial growth in the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers within Central Bedfordshire, and the requirement to provide them all with an initial review. This additional level of demand had impacted substantially on service provision.

In response to a Member's query on the future of the service given increasing economic constraint the Assistant Director, Children's Services Operations stated that all councils were now required to find more efficient ways of working and this could, possibly, lead to reduced level of service. However, he was confident that Central Bedfordshire was well sited to continue providing a good quality Corporate Parenting service.

#### **NOTED**

- 1 the activity of the Conference and Review Service in relation to the reviews of Looked After Children during 2015-16 as set out within the Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report;**
- 2 the Panel's concerns with regard to emerging pressures on the Corporate Parenting service.**

#### **RESOLVED**

- 1 that the officers be thanked and commended for their efforts in improving the delivery of good outcomes for Looked After Children and young people;**

- 2 that updates be submitted to the Panel with regard to the emerging pressures on the Corporate Parenting service.**

CPP/16/5. **Agency Report Quarter 4 - Fostering 1 January-31 March 2016**

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing which introduced the Quarter 4 Performance Report for the Fostering Agency. In view of the presence of a further report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing on the Fostering Agency Annual Report for 2015/16 on the agenda (agenda item 6 refers), it was agreed that both reports should be considered concurrently (minute CPP/16/6 below also refers).

Following introductions to the reports by the Practice Manager, Fostering the meeting turned to consider various issues contained within them. The Panel noted that both reports had been highly positive in their conclusions on the quality of service provided to Looked After Children and young people.

Full discussion took then place with regard to the content of the reports. Amongst the many issues raised was the £414k overspend arising mainly from inter agency costs and the rise in child arrangements/special guardianship orders and adoption allowances. In response The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations set out the cost pressures in this area and explained that the increase had largely arisen due to the numbers of unaccompanied asylum seekers reaching Central Bedfordshire. He explained that if it was necessary to make use of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) or that some unaccompanied asylum seekers had special requirements then there was a cost impact. He added that the Head of Corporate Parenting was scheduled to report to the Director of Children's Services on this matter and the information would be made available to Members in due course. The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations added that the unaccompanied asylum seekers wanted to attend college and do well and they had not usually suffered from the abuse sometimes found in British born children. Nonetheless, they did have different needs and this added to the costs.

The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations explained that Central Bedfordshire was experiencing the second highest number of unaccompanied asylum seekers in the Eastern Region but that the Council had been successful in dealing with this pressure. He then briefed Members on the Council's responsibilities towards unaccompanied asylum seekers. In response to a Member's question regarding the possible dispersal of unaccompanied asylum seekers to other local authorities the Assistant Director explained that a national disposal scheme existed but that currently, because its own numbers were so high, Central Bedfordshire was not expected to take anymore. However, should that number fall then the situation would change although he did not envisage this happening in the foreseeable future.

A foster carer representative raised a number of queries regarding the age range of those children that carers would be expected to foster. In response the Practice Manager, Fostering explained that neither existing nor new carers



would be expected to foster any child or young person of any age between 0-18. She stated that when a person applied to become a foster carer their suitability to foster particular age groups was considered. Further, any decision would take full account of the carer's own wishes and whether or not he or she felt confident and comfortable with fostering certain age groups. However, the Council was always actively seeking those willing to foster older children simply because it was difficult to secure carers for that group.

Another foster carer representative commented that the report failed to mention the loss of foster carers over the previous twelve months and the reasons for the retention problem. In response the Practice Manager, Fostering stated that this issue would be included in next year's report.

Arising from comments by the Chairman discussion took place on foster care and the various schemes related to accommodation for young persons. In response to a query by a Children in Care Council (CiCC) Ambassador the Practice Manager, Fostering stated that the supported lodging scheme was still active though only used for the Council's external placements at present. The CiCC Ambassador advised the meeting that she had previously lived in supported lodging and she had found it to have been a positive experience in teaching the skills required to live an independent life. She was aware that other young people also wanted to experience living in this type of accommodation. The Practice Manager, Fostering advised that the scheme was to be promoted and enlarged and staff recruiting would take place in September.

A Member raised a number of questions including whether respite foster carers were recruited so that they could be used to provide foster carers with a break from their responsibilities. She also sought clarification as to how those Looked After Children with special needs were supported. In response the Practice Manager, Fostering referred to the Family Link Scheme which offered short breaks to children of all ages who had a physical or functional disability. In addition support for foster carers could be provided through various means.

In response to various queries by the Vice-Chairman on the availability of accommodation for young people the Assistant Director Housing Services stated that there was insufficient suitable housing of all types for young persons though the move was towards shared accommodation partly through a reduction in the under occupation of properties by older people. The Practice Manager, Fostering added that the statutory responsibility for the care of a young person ended at 21 or, if the young person was in further education, 25. The Head of Corporate Parenting added that it was possible for the young person to stay beyond 25 with the mutual agreement of both the former carer and the young person.

In conclusion the Chairman recognised the excellent work and progress undertaken by the Fostering Agency whilst acknowledging the pressures on the service arising from the arrival of an increased number of unaccompanied asylum seekers.

**NOTED**

- 1 the Fostering Agency Quarter 4 Performance Report for 1 January – 31 March 2016;**
- 2 the Annual Report of the Fostering Agency for the period 2015 – 2016.**

**CPP/16/6. Corporate Parenting Service-Fostering Team Annual Report 2015/16**

In view of the related content in agenda items 6 (Agency Report Quarter 4 – Fostering 1 January – 31 March 2016) and 7 (Corporate Parenting Service - Fostering Team Annual Report 2015/16) these items were considered in conjunction with each other (minute CPP/16/5 above also refers).

**CPP/16/7. Adoption Agency Annual Report 2015/16**

The Panel received a report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing on the Adoption Agency Annual Report for 2015/16. A copy of the Annual Report was attached at Appendix A to the Executive Member's report. The meeting noted that the Annual Report described the activities of the Council's Adoption Agency during the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, including achievements and the remit and focus of the Agency's work. The report also identified recommendations for the development of the service.

Following an introduction to the Annual Report by the Practice Manager, Adoption various issues were raised for debate. A Member drew the meeting's attention to the absence of the usual reports by the Chairmen of both the Fostering and Adoption Panels as appendices to the respective Annual Reports and asked that they be submitted to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel in September with covering reports.

A Member then referred to that section of the Adoption Agency Annual Report which dealt with the local adoption consortium. Central Bedfordshire had been a member of the consortium until its replacement by a proposed regional adoption agency known as the Central East Partnership, operating under the lead of the Corum children's charity. The Member commented on the differences in membership between the two bodies. In response the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations updated Members on the current membership of the proposed Partnership. He also explained the current relationship with Corum and advised that the Chairman of that organisation had visited recently and had been made aware of the Council's concerns regarding the creation of the Partnership and the possible impact on service provision. The Assistant Director briefly outlined the possible interim arrangements which could be introduced. He also stressed that Central Bedfordshire was a partner in the development of the Partnership and was not in control of the process. The Council did, however, retain the option of leaving the Partnership if it was unhappy. A Member expressed her concerns at the lack of localism and, given the almost certain requirement for travel over greater distances, the strong, negative impact on Adoption Panel members, social workers and carers.

Whilst acknowledging these concerns the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations stressed that adoption rates were dropping, some voluntary adoption agencies were struggling financially and that the government favoured the regional approach.

#### **NOTED**

**the Adoption Agency Annual Report for 2014/15.**

#### **RESOLVED**

**that the reports by the Chairmen of the Adoption and Fostering Panels, usually attached to the annual reports of the Adoption and Fostering Agencies, be submitted together with covering reports to the Corporate Parenting Panel on 5 September 2016.**

#### CPP/16/8. **Work Programme**

Members considered a report which provided, as context, the final part of the Panel's work programme for the municipal year 2015/16. The report also set out the proposed work programme for the whole of the municipal year for 2016/17.

The meeting was aware that an additional item had been added to the work programme during the meeting (minute CPP/16/7 above refers).

In addition a Member requested that a spotlight session be held to which other Members of the Council should be invited to attend together with officers from other Council directorates. She also suggested that the Looked After Children and young people present at the session should represent the diversity of the cultures found within Central Bedfordshire. The Chairman asked the meeting to consider what issues it would wish to consider at the spotlight session and advise the Member of their thoughts.

#### **RESOLVED**

**that the proposed 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 Chairmen's report for the Fostering and Adoption Panels at the Panel's September meeting.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.13 p.m.)

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**Central Bedfordshire Council**

**Corporate Parenting Panel**

Monday, 5 September 2016

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**Fostering Agency Report - Quarter 1 (1 April - 30 June 2016)**

Report of Cllr Hegley, Executive Member for Social Care and Housing  
([carol.hegley@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:carol.hegley@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

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

Annie Craig, Practice Manager, Fostering  
([annie.craig@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:annie.craig@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk))

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**Purpose of this report**

1. Fostering Services Regulations 2011 requires the Fostering Agency to monitor the activities of the Fostering Service and ensure quality performance. Quarterly reports are presented to elected Members to keep them informed and updated on the activities in the Fostering Service so that Members can monitor and comment on the quality and performance of the Service.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Executive or Committee is asked to:

1. To comment on and note the Fostering Agency Quarter 1 Report.

**Issues**

2. The Children Act 2004, Care Standards Act 2000 and associated relevant Regulations and National Minimum Standards require the Local Authority Fostering Service to report to Members quarterly on the activities of the Service.
3. This is the first quarter report for the financial year 2016/2017.

**Recruitment of Foster Carers**

4. During April, May and June 2016, a variety of recruitment activities and events took place in line with the Fostering Services Recruitment Action Plan.
5. In terms of outreach work 6 activities took place (2 in each month). These included information stands at Chicksands Family Fun Day and

with the 'Just Ask' bus in Sandy, Flitwick, Shefford and Stotfold. We also held an information drop in event at Stephenson Court, Bedford where members of the public were invited to attend to find out more about fostering.

6. Throughout this quarter some ongoing advertising continued, these included;
  - A page sponsor with East of England Online.
  - A 7 foot poster promoting fostering in Dunstable shopping centre
  - An A5 fostering advert displayed in Info Central; your guide to Council Services, spending and key contacts for 2016/17 (this was sent out to all homes in Central Bedfordshire with Council Tax bills).
  - Fostering continued to advertise on a roundabout in Flitwick outside Tesco store and fostering adverts were still being used on the back of the jackets of crossing patrol staff at various schools across Central Bedfordshire.
  - A digital fostering advert was placed in waiting rooms in Dr's surgeries throughout the CBC area.
  - Posters were distributed to dental surgeries across the County.
  - A fostering advert was projected in the main reception area at Priory House, Chicksands.
  - Targeted leaflet drops took place in areas where our children are placed in Independent Fostering Agencies (I.F.A.'s), leaflets were also distributed promoting a forthcoming information evening.
  - An article highlighting our current recruitment needs was placed in Flitwick's paper magazine which is sent to all homes in Flitwick including local shops and community building.
  
7. The following press coverage took place during this quarter;
  - An interview with a foster carer in an article promoting sibling contact went in the Fostering Network's national magazine.
  - A fostering article about fostering fortnight was sent out to all staff in Staff Central.
  - Press releases regarding Foster Care fortnight were also sent to local media and parish councils.
  - Press releases were sent to local media promoting information events around the County.
  
8. On line posts for this quarter included;
  - Sponsorship with East of England Online with an editorial in their digital magazine.
  - An A5 events flyer was also shared with the community safety partnership service to share with contacts in town and parish councils, community groups, health, police and fire services promoting forthcoming information evenings.
  - Email bulletins or email articles were placed in various newsletters including Early Years, Bedford Hospital Staff,

Governors Essential and Connect (social care, health, housing and portfolio holders).

- A priority area is increasing the number of placements for unaccompanied asylum seeking children so an article focussing on unaccompanied asylum seeking children was sent to a contact in Discover Islam who agreed to share with those who work/volunteer for Discover Islam.
  - An email alert regarding our 'Great Dad's Award' winners and promoting fostering in general was sent to residents who had signed up to CBC email alerts (all areas – total of 2589 recipients)
  - Google advertising campaign continued and various E-bulletins were sent out to various residents in CBC, i.e. those who had enquired about fostering previously.
  - Regular tweets and posts continued on Fostering Facebook, CBC Facebook/Twitter etc.
9. As a result of the recruitment activities that took place during this quarter the Fostering Service received
- 25 enquiries; 7 in April, 11 in May and 7 in June (this is 1 more than in the last quarter).
  - 14 Initial Visits to prospective foster carers during this period; 3 in April; 7 in May and 4 in June (this is 1 less than in the previous quarter).
  - There were 7 application forms received; 0 in April, 4 in May and 3 in June (this is 2 more than in the previous quarter).
  - The best form of recruitment during this period was via the CBC website, followed by the Google campaign and IFA foster carers wanting to transfer.

### **Assessments**

10. During this quarter 12 new assessments were started;
- 6 career carers
  - 5 Family and Friends
  - 1 Special Guardianship Order (SGO). As of the 30 June 2016 there were a total of 15 assessments in progress
  - 7 career carers
  - 1 Regulation 24 (temporary approval)
  - 3 Family and Friends
  - 4 SGO assessments
11. During this quarter 2 fostering households were approved, 1 for 2 children aged 7 years and 3 years, the other for 1 child aged 2 years. These were Family and Friends carers.
12. As at the 30 June 2016 the Fostering Service had a total of 104 fostering households, 82 of which were career carers.

13. In relation to the ethnicity of foster carers, this broadly reflects the ethnicity of our children in care.

<b>Ethnicity</b>		
<i><b>Ethnicity</b></i>	<i><b>Foster Carers</b></i>	<i><b>Looked After Children</b></i>
White	173 (91%)	105 (84%)
Dual Heritage	2 (1%)	11 (9%)
Black or Black British	14 (7.5%)	6 (5%)
Asian	1 (0.5%)	3 (2%)
	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

14. As at the 30 June 2016 there were a total of 126 children placed with in house foster carers (63%), compared to 74 (37%) with Independent Fostering Agencies (I.F.A.'s). The percentage of children placed with in house carers compared to I.F.A.'s continues to increase. At the end of March 2014 the percentage of children placed in house was 46%, by the end of March 2015 it was 54%, by the end of March 2016 this had increased to 59% and as at the 30 June 2016 this percentage has further increased to 63%. Our aspiration continues to increase this further to 70%. This aspiration will never reach 100% as there will always be children that need to be placed out of the area or in IFA/residential placements. The Fostering Service's recruitment strategy continues to be to increase the number of in house local placements for our children in care which will not only better meet their needs but will decrease our reliance on more expensive IFA placements.

### **Referrals/Placements**

15. During April, May and June 2016 there were 54 new fostering placements made: 19 in April, 12 in May and 23 in June. This is a significant increase on the number of new fostering placements made compared to the last quarter, which were 11. This reflects the increasing numbers of UASC that have been accommodated in recent months (31 in this quarter). Out of the 54 new placements made, 23 were placed in house, 4 were placed in IFA's (all UASC's), 24 were placed in semi-independent living ( 21 of whom were UASC). 1 UASC was placed with carers from another Local Authority and 2 young people were placed in residential placements, 1 of whom was a child with disabilities.

### **Special Guardianship Orders**

16. As at the 30 June 2016 there were 133 Special Guardianship Orders in place (compared to 124 for the same period last year). Although Special Guardians are generally expected to access universal services, they are entitled to seek support from the Local Authority as and when required. The Fostering Service continues to work with a small cohort of families who contact the service sporadically for support and advice. On



average the Service works with about 5 families a month and will undertake visits, or provide telephone support in order to meet the needs of individual carers. The main areas Special Guardianship carers seek support with are in relation to contact; children's behaviour or support in financing respite or holiday activities. During this quarter the Fostering Service worked with 7 families in relation to providing advice and support.

### **Training**

17. During this quarter foster carers accessed a wide range of training opportunities to help them develop their knowledge and skills. 12 specialist training courses were arranged and were attended by 201 foster carers. Course facilitated included; Childcare emergency first aid, Self Harm, Demystifying online technologies and internet safety and support, Supporting adolescents with ADHD/ASC, Keeping Safe; de-escalation and restraint, Children who go missing: the risk of sexual exploitation, An Introduction to Eating Disorders, Supporting Children and Young People with Loss, Separation and Bereavement, Tax talk for foster carers, CAMHS; Attachment Disorders and CAMHS; Depression.
18. Foster carers also accessed training from the Early Years programme, these included; Paediatric first aid, Protective Behaviours, Working Together, modules 1 and 2, Looked After Children – LAC co-ordinator role, Makaton workshop and Understanding the Impact of Sexual Trauma.
19. E-learning was also accessed by carers in relation to the following subjects; Attachment and Brain Development; Basic Awareness, Child and Adult Sexual Exploitation, An Introduction to Safeguarding Children, Child Accident Prevention for Parents and Carers, Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect, Pathways to Extremism and Safeguarding Children from Abuse by Sexual Exploitation.
20. As at the 30 June 2016 there were 72 fostering households that had completed their mandatory Training, Support and Development Standard (TSD) portfolios. 24 households were yet to complete their portfolios but still had time to address within the required timescales. 3 households were overdue in completing their portfolios and were outside the required timescale. Supervising social workers and the Marketing, Recruitment and Training Support Officer were providing additional support to help these carers complete the Standards.

### **Ofsted Notifications**

21. Whenever a significant event happens i.e. a child goes missing from placement or a serious incident/accident occurs the agency have to report these to Ofsted. During this period there were no notifications reported.

### **Allegations**

22. During this period there were no allegations made regarding foster carers.

### **Complaints**

23. In June, 1 formal complaint was made by a foster carer regarding the unprofessional conduct from her previous supervising social worker, the lack of support from her current supervising social worker and historical data breaches made in 2013 and 2014. The complaint was investigated under CBC procedures and the complaint was not upheld in relation to the unprofessional conduct of the previous supervising social worker or the lack of support from the current supervising social worker. In relation to the historical data breaches where the foster carer had stated her address had been given out to birth parents this was dealt with at the time. Many of the staff that were involved previously had now left the Local Authority which had made it difficult for the investigating officer to undertake a thorough investigation at this point due to the passage of time. The manager who dealt with the complaint, however, did reassure the complainant that since that date, steps had been taken to improve the system within Children's Services and that as a Local Authority we have a more robust reporting and investigation process in place to minimise the risk of such incidents reoccurring.

### **Compliments**

24. During this quarter the Fostering Service received 10 compliments either regarding the work of the foster carers or staff within the Fostering Service. Compliments were made by the Fostering Panel in relation to the high quality of work and presentation of a number of Fostering Social Workers when at panel. A childcare social worker complimented a foster carer on the excellent life story work she completed for a child in her care. Another childcare social worker fed back regarding the work of one of our foster carers who she felt had gone 'above and beyond' what she had expected of her in her role as a foster carer. An I.R.O. complimented one of the Fostering social workers on the support she had provided to a foster carer. 3 foster carers also complimented the work of their supervising social workers, one for her support and trust, another for her patience and support and another for being a 'shining star'. She stated that her supervising social worker was 'reliable, consistent, and responsive to their communication and generally a great support'.

### **Staffing**

28. Fostering comes under the umbrella of the Corporate Parenting Service and the Head of Service has overall management responsibility for Fostering. Under the Head of Service is the Practice Manager who is also the Registered Manager for the Fostering

Agency. This person monitors and manages the activities of the Fostering Agency and supervises the 2 Team Managers. They have day to day responsibility for the management of the 2 fostering teams. During this quarter, 4 members of staff have left the service and a further 2 are due to leave in September.

### **Council Priorities**

29. Central Bedfordshire Council's medium term plan priority C Promote Health and Wellbeing.

The Children and Young People's Plan 2001-2014; Priority 2 Protecting children and keeping them safe.

Fostering is a key statutory service to Looked After Children.

### **Legal Implications**

30. This report provides updating information to allow consideration of the activities of the Fostering Agency in the previous quarter as required by legislation, there are no further legal implications.

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

31. This is a position and update report. There are no financial implications.

### **Equalities Implications**

32. 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.

The ethnicity of foster carers broadly reflects the ethnicity of children in care. Due to a significant increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children/young people the service is reviewing existing recruitment activities. All foster carers receive a variety of training which helps ensure that they can meet the needs of all children and young people in their care.

### **Conclusion and next Steps**

33. Whilst the Fostering Service has met the recruitment targets set for the previous 2 years a more challenging one has been set for this financial year. The Fostering Service aims to recruit 10 more foster carers as well as convert 21 number of I.F.A. placements into in house ones. The Service is on course to meet the first target with 7 assessments

currently in progress but the second target, thus far, is proving challenging. It is anticipated that the introduction of a 'golden handshake' of £2,000 to I.F.A. carers transferring will prove to be an excellent incentive to carers interested in transferring and will help the team to recruit carers for UASC, sibling groups and teenagers.

34. This quarter has seen a significant increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children/young people needing to be accommodated. As this number rises the Service has had to review its recruitment strategy and identify creative ways of recruiting carers and supporting existing carers in being able to take on and support the specific needs these children and young people present.
35. During this quarter there have been no notifications to Ofsted or allegations made against foster carers. There has only been 1 formal complaint made and this was not upheld. This low level of activity in this area not just for this quarter but the previous 2 quarters indicates that foster carers have been provided with appropriate levels of supervision, support and training to help ensure children's needs are being met. This is also supported by the compliments we have received from foster carers and other professionals who have commented on the excellent support foster carers have received.
36. In conclusion this has been a promising start for the Fostering Service, the recruitment targets are challenging and the Service is working hard to try to achieve these. A further challenge for the Service going forward in this financial year will be in terms of trying to retain the existing carers who are currently fostering. The Fostering Service has had a significant number of staff changes over the last 6 months which has meant many foster carers have experienced a change of supervising social workers on at least 2/3 occasions. This year we have recruited several new members of staff who are highly motivated and who have a very relevant skill base. I am therefore confident that we will be able to retain those foster carers who continue to provide a high standard of care to Looked After Children.

### **Appendices**

None

### **Background Papers**

None

## The Pledge

As your Corporate Parents we want you to be successful in all you do; we promise to make sure you have the best opportunities and support to reach your potential.

**Your journey:** As your corporate parents we will treat you with dignity, equality and respect. We will provide you with a home that you can feel safe, settled and happy. We will provide you with information about being in care, help you understand your journey and be alongside you. We will help you to build a positive relationship with your allocated social worker and with other professionals involved with your care so you feel that your views and your journey matters. It is important that you are listened to and your wishes and feelings are included in your care plans and that you are supported to make decisions. We will encourage you to participate in the Children in Care Council activities and events and provide peer mentor support so you can talk to other looked after children and care leavers. We will ask you for feedback about the services you receive and use this to develop the service.

**Looking after you and support along the way:** Your health is very important, we will support you in staying fit and healthy and we will ensure you are registered with a doctor and dentist and help you to access other health services if needed. You will be offered regular health check ups with the Looked After Children's Nurse.

We will always make time for you and ensure you see your Social Worker and Independent Review Officer on a regular basis and provide you with contact information so you can always speak to someone. Having strong relationships with your corporate parents is important so you can continue your journey with as little bumps as possible.

We will support you in your education and support your future goals and aspirations and always celebrate your achievements. You will receive support from the Virtual School to reach your educational potential. We will encourage you to take part in school trips and after school clubs. We will support your hobbies and interests. We will always look for new opportunities for you to develop new hobbies, interests and skills.

**Living through your journey:** We will support you with accessing life story work and encourage you to keep a life book / memory book so you can understand your journey and help support future goals. We will support you to stay in contact with family and friends and help you to develop meaningful relationships (if safe to do so). We will give you information about independent visitors and advocates and support you to access these services.

**Future aspirations:** When you leave care we will continue to support you in future choices and aspirations, we will make sure you have all the right documents that you will need such as a birth certificate, passport and national insurance number. When you turn 18 you will have an allocated personal adviser who will support you through the transition of leaving care.

DRAFT

**Central Bedfordshire Council**

**Corporate Parenting Panel**

Monday, 5 September 2016

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**Work Programme**

Advising Officers:

Mel Peaston, Committee Services Manager  
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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.

**Council Priorities**

3. 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**

4. There are no legal implications.

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

5. There are no financial and risk implications.

### **Equalities Implications**

6. 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.
7. 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**

8. 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>2016/17 Municipal Year</b>	
4 July 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2015/16 (SK)</li> <li>• Fostering Agency Q4 Performance Report (AC)</li> <li>• Fostering Agency Annual Report 2015/16 (AC)</li> <li>• Adoption Agency Annual Report 2015/16 (NP)</li> <li>• Work Programme (LM)</li> </ul>
5 September 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LAC Annual (Health) Report (NHS – Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group) (TMcD)</li> <li>• Fostering Service Q1 Report (AC)</li> <li>• Chairman of Adoption Panel – Annual Report (NP/GF)</li> <li>• The Pledge (MS/CiCC)</li> <li>• Work Programme (LM)</li> <li>• CiCC Presentation/The Pledge (MS/CiCC Representatives) EXEMPT ITEM</li> </ul>
14 November 2016	<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 (LM)</li> </ul>
16 January 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption Fund (NP)</li> <li>• Work Programme (LM)</li> </ul>
6 March 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CiCC and Participation Annual Report 2016/17 (MS/CiCC)</li> <li>• Fostering Service Q3 Report (AC)</li> <li>• Virtual School for LAC Interim Report (JE)</li> <li>• LAC Health Report – Six Monthly Update NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (TMcD)</li> <li>• Work Programme (LM)</li> </ul>
8 May 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose, Fostering Agency Statement of Purpose (EW)</li> <li>• Corporate Parenting Action Plan – Annual Review (EW)</li> <li>• Work Programme (LM)</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)
- 'Spotlight Report' providing examples of young people in different types of accommodation situations and what their experiences and outcomes were (18.01.16)
- Statistical information be provided on the number of young people, how they move on and what type of housing offers they receive (18.01.16)
- Given the perceived demand for foyer type accommodation, information be supplied on what is currently available within Central Bedfordshire and what the aspiration is for future provision (18.01.16)
- The impact of the government's policies towards the adoption process, including the changes to the family court system (18.01.16)
- Proposal on how to co-ordinate information relating to the Council's role as corporate parent (18.01.16)
- Accuracy of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (EW) (14.03.16)
- Academic progress made by children since becoming Looked After (14.03.16)
- Personal Advisor to attend Panel to explain measures taken to raise LAC expectations (JE) (14.03.16)
- Regular Update reports on the establishment of a regional adoption agency (GJ) (09.05.16)
- 'Spotlight Report' on youth support and help for adolescents in gaining further education, apprenticeships or employment (GJ) (09.05.16)
- 'Spotlight Session' – subject to be determined (04.07.16)