

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 23 February 2017

NOTICE OF MEETING

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Date & Time

Monday, 6 March 2017 at 10.00 a.m.

Venue at

Room 14, 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.

***Please note that phones or other equipment may be used to film, audio record, tweet or blog from this meeting. No part of the meeting room is exempt from public filming.**

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

AGENDA

Apologies for Absence

To receive any apologies for absence.

Minutes

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 14 November 2016 (copy attached).

Members' Interests

To receive from Members any declarations of interest.

Chairman's Announcements and Communications

To receive any announcements from the Chairman and any matters of communication.

Reports

- | Item | Subject | Page Nos. |
|------|--|-------------|
| 5. | Children in Care Council and Participation 2016 - 2017

To consider the Children in Care Council's Annual Report for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. | * 51 - 66 |
| 6. | LAC Health Report - Six Monthly Update

To consider an update on the NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group's Looked After Children Annual Report for 2015/16. | + To Follow |
| 7. | Update of the Adoption Support Fund

To consider a report setting out the remit of the Adoption Support Fund and how the Council is making use of it. | * 67 - 72 |
| 8. | Fostering Agency Report - Quarter 3 (1 October - 31 December 2016)

To consider a report outlining the activity in the Fostering Service from October to December 2016. | * 73 - 80 |

9. **Work Programme** * 81 - 84

To consider the Panel's work programme.

10. **Exclusion of the 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 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Exempt Items

<i>Item</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Exempt Para.</i>	<i>Page Nos.</i>
11.	Children in Care Council Presentation To receive a presentation from the Children in Care Council.	* 2	
12.	Virtual School for Looked After Children - Interim Report To consider a report which provides information on the role of the Virtual School and the validated outcomes for Central Bedfordshire Looked After Children in the Academic Year 2015/16 and the steps being taken in the Academic Year 2016/17 to raise the levels of achievement and progress for all Looked After Children.	* 2	85 - 118

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 15, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford on Monday, 14 November 2016

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

Cllrs Mrs C Hegley (Chairman)
Mrs A L Dodwell (Vice-Chairman)
R D Berry (substituting for 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 D Thorne

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

Officers in Attendance:	Ms K Baughan	– Social Worker, Court and Permanency
	Ms A Craig	– Practice Manager, Fostering
	Ms J Edwards	– Head of Service, Virtual School and Vulnerable Pupils
	Mr G Jones	– Assistant Director Children's Services Operations
	Mr L Manning	– Committee Services Officer
	Miss N Phillips	– Practice Manager, Adoption
	Mr N Stock	– Practice Manager, Court and Permanency

Others in Attendance:	Ambassador	– for Children in Care Council
	Dr S Chakrabarti	– Director Public Health
	Ms S Fitzpatrick	– Professional Lead, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Looked After Children Team

CPP/16/19. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

Present – Elected Members (voting)

Add 'R D Berry (substituting for Councillor N B Costin)' and 'B Wells' to the list of those Members present at the meeting.

CPP/16/20. **Members' Interests**

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

CPP/16/21. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The following announcements and communications were made:

- the Chairman referred to the problem experienced by some Members in accessing the exempt report at item 9 on the agenda
- the Chairman expressed her thanks to all those involved in the recent Children in Care Council awards evening and for the contribution made by both Members and officers
- at the request of the Chairman the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations outlined the circumstances relating to the recent death in Luton of a former Central Bedfordshire Council care leaver and stated that a learning review would be carried out by the Council. The Assistant Director undertook to fully brief the Chairman on the case.

CPP/16/22. **Emotional Wellbeing of Children and Young People**

The Panel received a comprehensive presentation on promoting the emotional wellbeing and mental health of Looked After Children and young people and the role of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs). Copies of the questionnaires were circulated at the meeting for Members' information.

A copy of the presentation is attached at Appendix A to these minutes.

Points and comments included:

- consideration was being given to increasing staffing levels in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to deal with demand where necessary

- the clear gender differences in the SDQ scores, with boys scoring higher (poorer). These were due to the different coping mechanisms employed by boys and girls when responding to difficult emotional issues
- the reasons for the below national average figures for anxiety and depression amongst children and young people in Central Bedfordshire had not been identified. However, it was suggested that, at a national level, factors such as social media, pressure to succeed and lower levels of resilience coupled with greater recognition of the problem were contributory factors.

NOTED**the comprehensive presentation on the emotional wellbeing of Looked After Children and young people.****CPP/16/23. Fostering Agency Report - Quarter 2 (1 July - 30 September 2016)**

The Panel considered the report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing which outlined activity in the Fostering Service during Quarter 2 (1 July to 30 June 2016).

Points and comments included:

- although officers assisted foster carers to complete the required mandatory training some carers experienced difficulties in doing so due to work commitments and time constraints. The consequences included a potential drop in tier and associated fee level
- the recruitment of foster carers was now targeted towards securing carers for older children, unaccompanied asylum seekers and those children with complex needs. The Council had been successful in recruiting carers willing to foster sibling groups and further developments in this area were expected
- successful efforts had been made to recruit younger foster carers to ensure that older carers who retired were replaced.

NOTED**the content of the Quarter 2 report on the Fostering Service for the period July to September 2016.****CPP/16/24. Six Monthly Report in Respect of the Adoption Service - 1 April to 30 September 2016**

The Panel considered the report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing which outlined activity in the Adoption Service over the six month period from 1 April to 30 September 2016.

Points and comments included:

- despite the Government's support for increased adoption levels the number of adoptions was decreasing as a result of the high thresholds set by the family courts, the range of alternative permanency options and an insufficient number of younger children and those regarded as the most suitable by prospective adopters
- the family courts' interpretation of the law had impacted on the viability of some adoption agencies
- the increasing number of unaccompanied asylum seekers had not contributed to the number of children of adoptable age in England to any extent as the predominant group were older teenagers and some were reunited with their families on reaching the UK.

NOTED

the content of the six monthly report on the Adoption Service for the period April to September 2016.

CPP/16/25. **Exclusion of the 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/16/26. **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 at Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 for Looked After Children in the academic year 2015/16. The report also identified the measures taken by the Virtual School in the current academic year 2016/17, in partnership with other agencies, to raise the achievement and progress of all Looked After Children.

Points and comments included:

- appreciation of the work undertaken by the officers and the detailed data provided in the report

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.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.56 p.m.)

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Appendix A

Emotional Well Being and Mental Health (EWB&MH)

Promoting the Emotional Well Being and Mental Health of Looked After Children and Young People, including The Role of SDQs

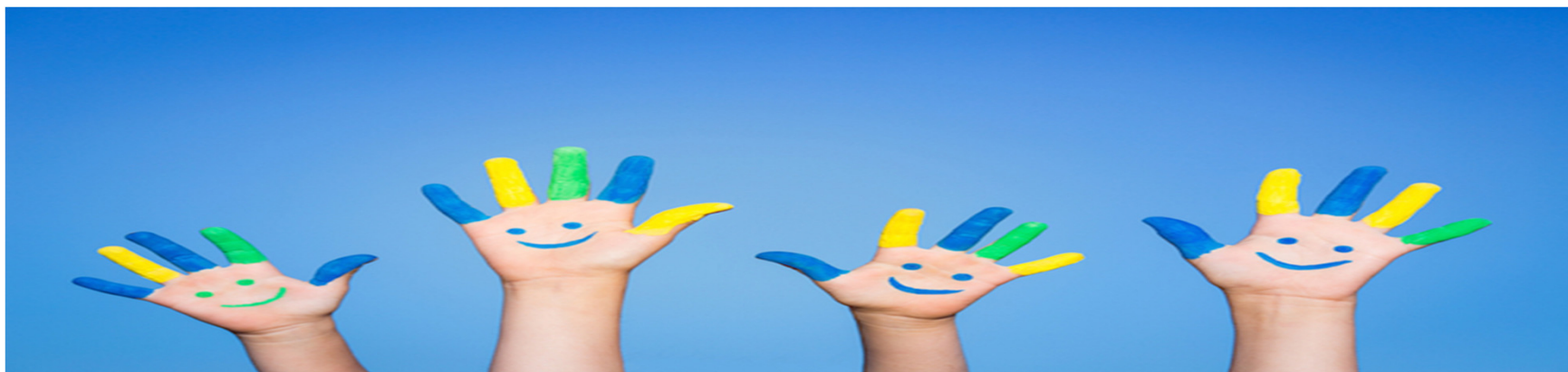
- 1) What is emotional well being and mental health?
- 2) What promotes Emotional Well Being and Mental Health and what doesn't help?
- 3) What is a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)?
- 4) What is the profile of our SDQ cohort?
- 5) What do we do for Looked After Children and Young People whose SDQ indicates follow up is required?
- 6) Conclusion
- 7) NEXT STEPS



Contributors to this presentation

- 1) **Children in Care Council members and Ambassadors**
- 2) Nigel Stock, Practice Manager, Court and Permanence
- 3) Samantha Fitzpatrick, Professional Lead, CAMHS LAC Team
- 4) Jackie Edwards, Virtual School Head
- 5) Nicola Bescoby, Looked After Children Nurses
- 6) Pat Jennings, Youth Offending Service
- 7) Social Work Practitioners
- 8) Annie Craig, Practice Manager Fostering
- 9) Amy Clark, Registered Manager, Clophill
- 10) Dr. Sanhita Chakrabarti, Clinical Lead, Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- 11) CBC Performance Team





Direct Quotes from CAMHS service users:

Having my CAMHS practitioner's email so I can contact her when I need her

School – 'means everything', friends, supportive teachers, planning for my future

Participation and a sense of belonging to my community

CAMHS groups (art)

Family support

My inpatient friends and CAMHS friends I have met through groups/interview participation



‘at CAMHS they use questionnaires and some people, when I am in a better place make reference that they "have the old me back".

However I don't think comparing yourself to how you used to be is quite the best way to measure it because circumstances change and as people we are constantly learning new things about both ourselves and others’.

1)What is Emotional Well Being and Mental Health - **NICE (2013) Quality Standard 31: The health and wellbeing of looked-after children and young people. Statement 3.**

Emotional wellbeing (including happiness and confidence, and the opposite of depression/anxiety).



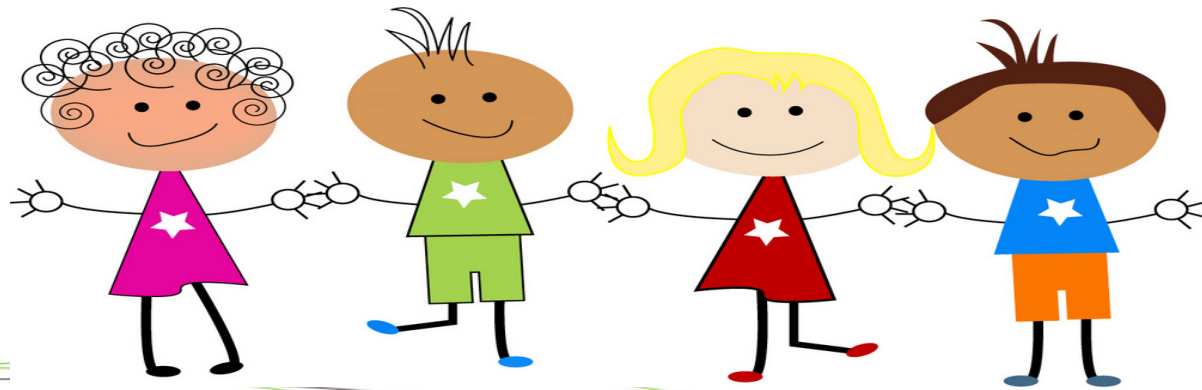
NICE (2013) Quality Standard 31: The health and wellbeing of looked-after children and young people. Statement 3.

Psychological wellbeing (including resilience, confidence, autonomy, attentiveness/involvement and the capacity to manage conflict and to problem solve).



NICE (2013) Quality Standard 31: The health and wellbeing of looked-after children and young people. Statement 3.

Social wellbeing (good relationships with others, and the opposite of conduct disorder, delinquency, interpersonal violence and bullying)



Other elements that promote positive emotional wellbeing and mental health

Good physical health



Stability



Social networks



2) Further more.....

- Feeling safe, happy and doing well in School



- Attachment, Identity and Self esteem



- Parents and Carers able to provide these things



Moving on to Looked After C/YP

2) Comments from CiCC members and Ambassadors: What promotes EWB&MH for Looked After Children/Young People?



- Placement Stability
- Consistency of Carers/Workers, School, Accommodation
- Group experience
- Social Workers coming along to events in the lives of looked after children and young people.
- Mentoring, informal mentoring
- Understanding that there isn't a set level of development
- Same gender workers (for boys especially) because girls get female workers
- Sensitivity from – e.g. Schools – re family structures
- Integrated, coordinated services

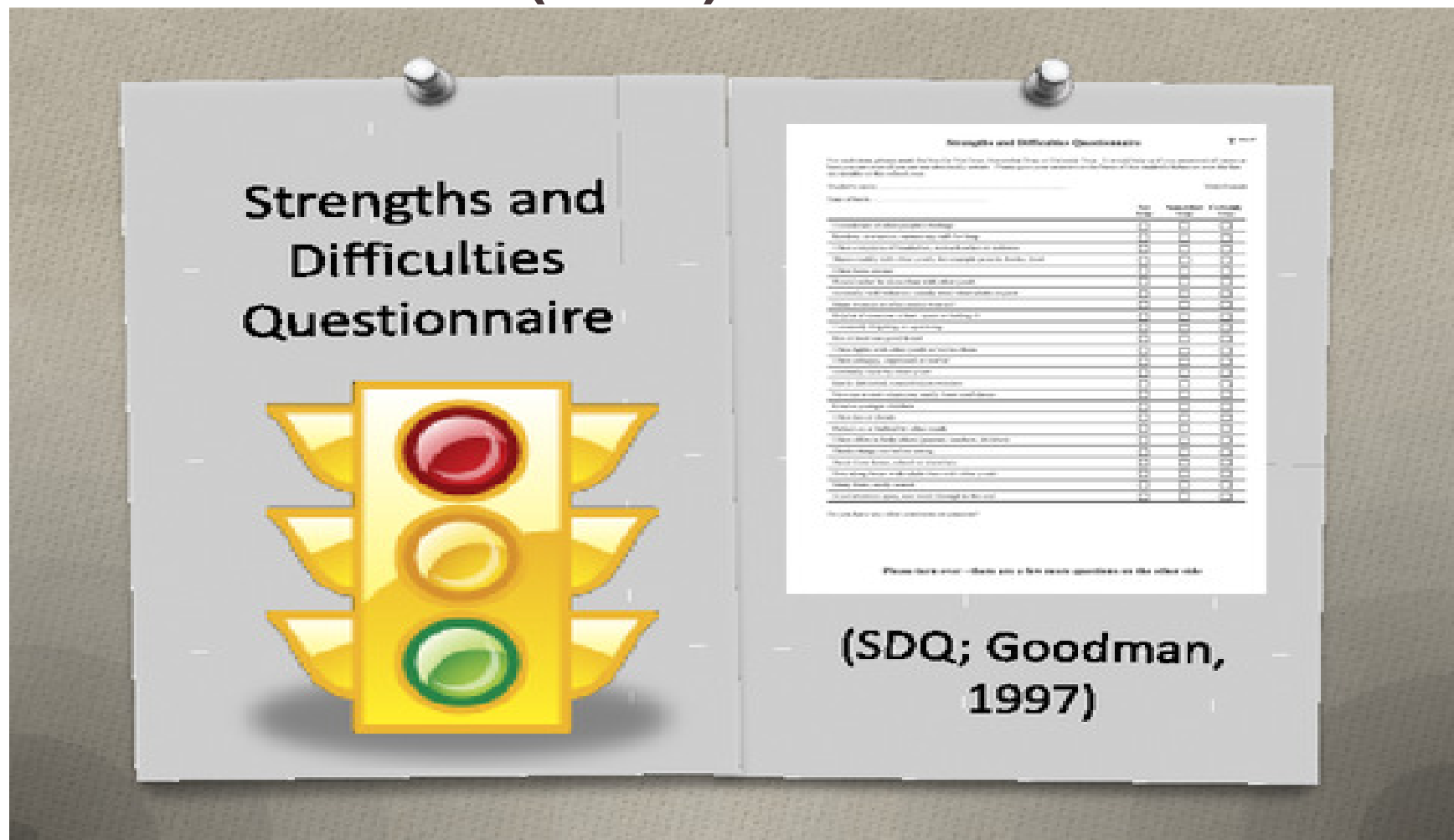
Knowing about your past and where you came from so it feels like your life has meaning

Questions? Moving Onto to SDQ

**NSPCC - What works to improve the emotional wellbeing of children in care
2015 – A Systems Approach. Louise Bazalgette, Tom Rahilly and Grace Trevelyan**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSOVk2cS-sY>

3) What is a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)?



(SDQ; Goodman, 1997)

3) What is a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)?

- A screening tool to assist in ensuring that the Emotional Well Being and Mental Health Needs of looked after children are being met
- A questionnaire available from the DfE which when completed gives a rating between 0 and 40. **A rating of 17+ is regarded as an indicator that further follow up** (assessment, professional input or treatment) *may* be needed
- Age banded for 2-4yr olds and 4-10 and 11 to 17yr olds
- ***“SDQ provides a broad measure of well being that might indicate need for further assessment... but cannot be used to screen for specific mental health issues...”***
- **ITS NOT:** A Psychiatric Assessment

SDQs, Overall Score, Specific Areas

For all 3 types of SDQ There is an overall score which is made up of scores in the following areas

- Emotion
- Behaviour
- Activity, Calmness, Concentration
- Peer relationships
- Positive Behaviour
- Impact of experiences

Who completes SDQs on whom?

- **All Looked After Children** 4-16yrs old, looked after 1 yr.+ , **must have an SDQ.**
- This SDQ is **completed by Their carers**, typically, foster carers or carers in residential homes.
- There are also **Education SDQs** and **SDQs** to be **completed by children and young people**
- **For a group of Looked After Children and Young People, Education and Self completion SDQs are being used as well as Carers' SDQs**

3) SDQ, Strengths

- Brief and easy to administer.
- It accurately measures what it is supposed to.
- Available in different languages and downloadable from the internet.
- Simple to score and interpret, with norms by country and gender
- Appears to be reliable in assessing looked after children (Goodman and Goodman, 2012).
- It is widely used across UK.

Measuring the wellbeing of looked after children - current approaches and future recommendations, Dartington, Research Into Practice

3) SDQ, Areas for Development

- **Low rates** of completion nationally
- **It is subject to variations** attributable to the individual completing it



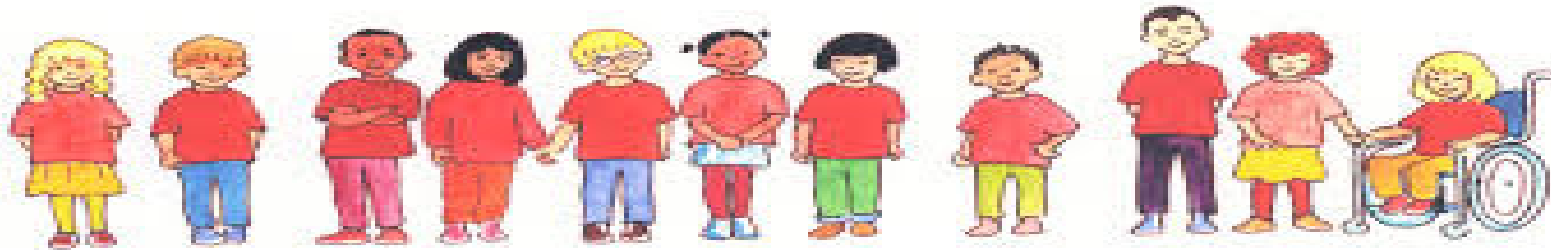
SDQ, Area for Development

2 or 3 people completing the form is better than 1

Does it ask how children and young people **feel**?



4) What is the profile of our SDQ Cohort



➤ COMPLETION

➤ AVERAGE SCORE

➤ SDQ Scores and Other Factors

COMPLETION OF STRENGTHS AND DIFFICULTIES QUESTIONNAIRES

Percentage of SDQ questionnaires completed

	31 03 2015	31 03 2016.
Stat Neighbours Ave:	60.1%	TBC
National Average:	71.8%	TBC
CBC:	???	???
Current fig:	???	

COMPLETION OF STRENGTHS AND DIFFICULTIES QUESTIONNAIRES

Percentage of SDQ questionnaires completed

	31 03 2015	31 03 2016.
Stat Neighbours Ave:	60.1%	TBC
National Average:	71.8%	TBC

CBC: 100% 100%

Current fig: 95.5%,

Positive for CBC, Comparisons

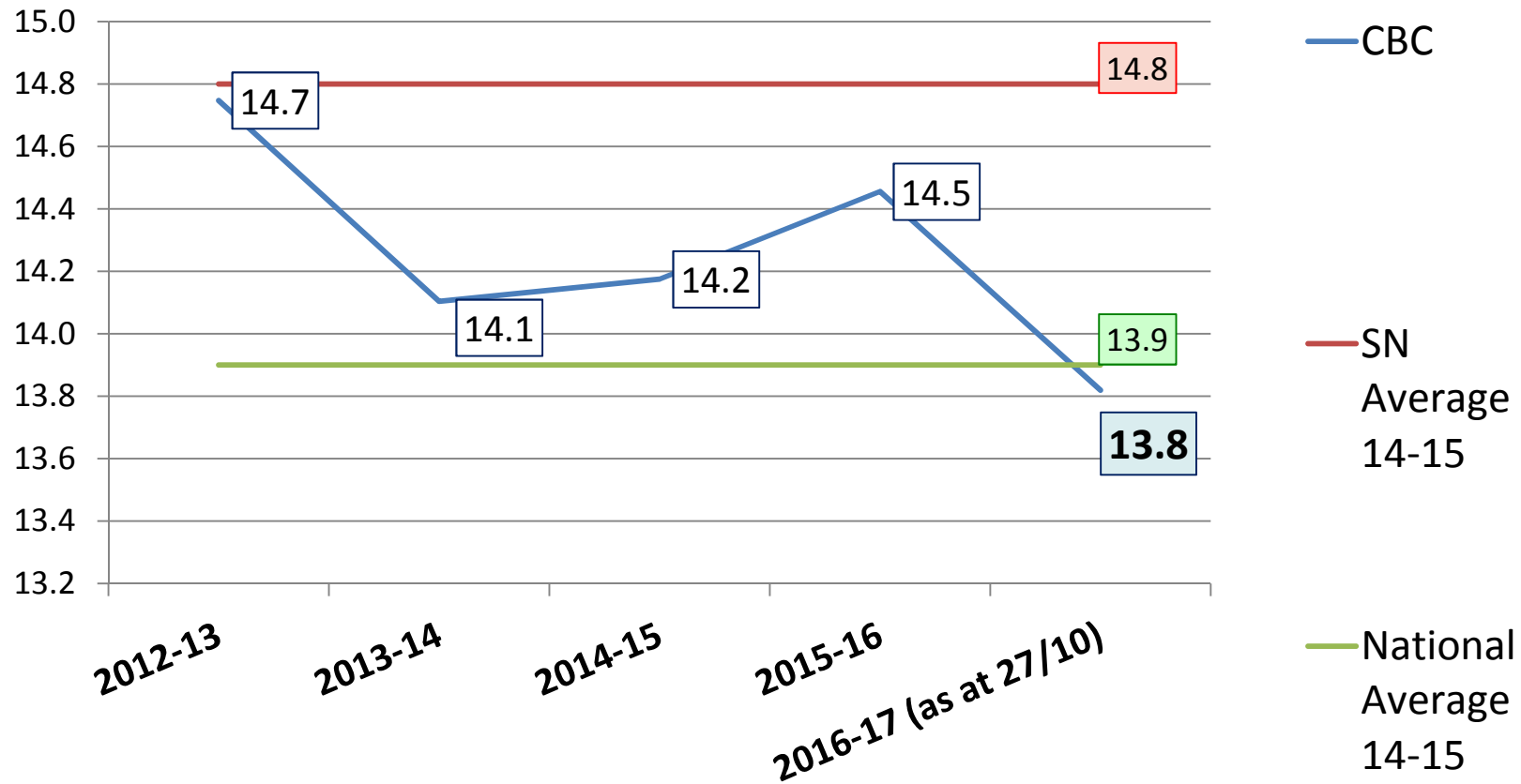
4) What is the profile of our SDQ Cohort

- SDQs are completed on all Looked After Children and Young People aged 2-16 who have been looked after longer than a year
- On Fri 27 10 2016. there were **105** children and young people in this category.
- The current average SDQ score for them is **13.82** This is below target, **well below statistical neighbours** and **just below national average.**

LOW Score = GOOD

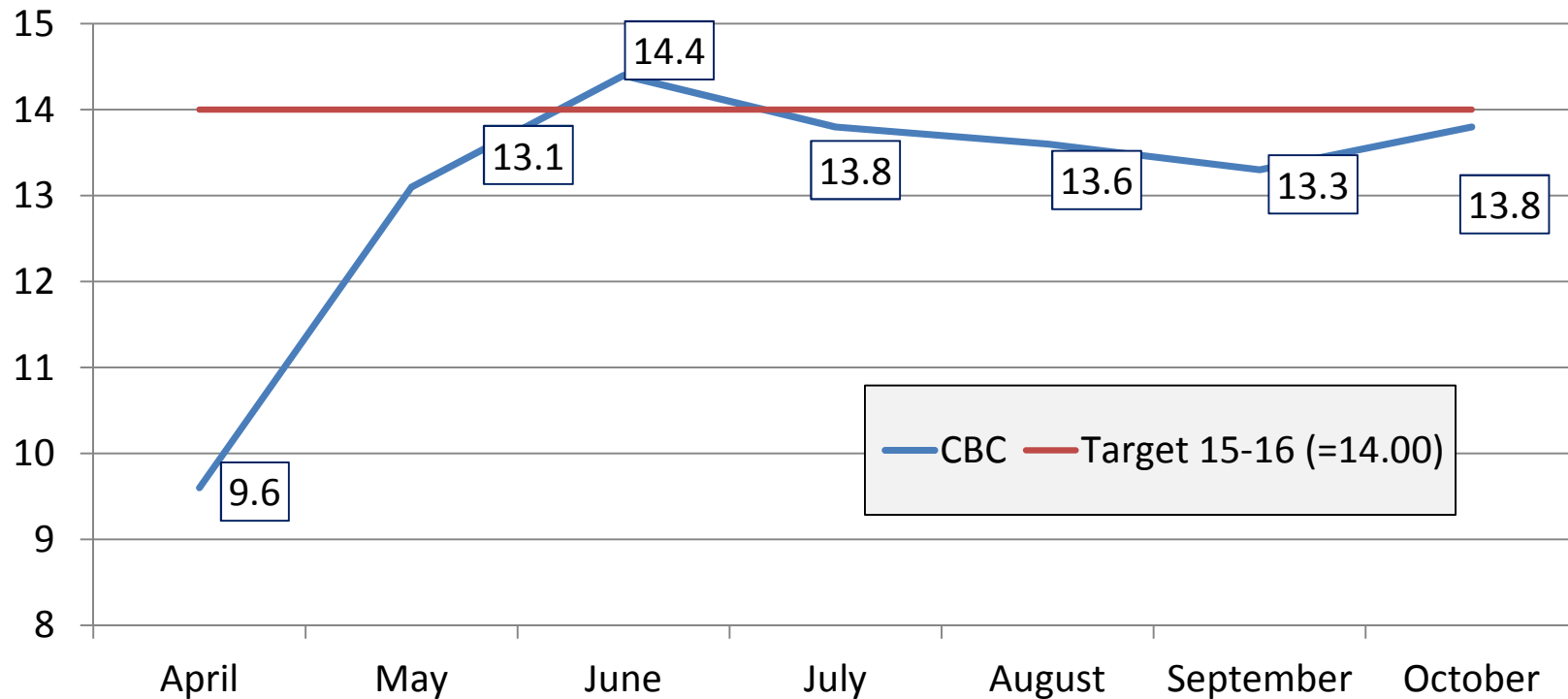
4) What is the profile of our SDQ Cohort: History, Progress.

Average SDQ Scores



4) What is the profile of our SDQ Cohort: History, Progress.

Average SDQ Scores YTD Monthly, THIS YEAR



4) What is the profile of our SDQ Cohort

- The average score for:



Males is **15.18**



Females is **12.32**

- There are 5 unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children/ Young People in the Cohort

4) What is the profile of our SDQ Cohort

There is not a striking effect on SDQ scores by Age, length of time looked after or length of time in placement

Ethnicity: of the **105** in the cohort **77** are in the category “White-British”, there are 9 other categories which have between 1 and 6 children/young people in them.

Average SDQ score of Looked After Children and Young People of **White-British** ethnicity is **13.85** (cf 13.82 whole cohort)

There were high **SDQ scores** for a small number of children and young people from **Traveller and Other Mixed backgrounds**

4) What is the profile of our SDQ Cohort

➤ Disability:

The average SDQ score of children and young people supported by Social Workers from the **Children With Disabilities (CWD) team** (a small number) is

16.25

This is higher than average for total cohort (13.85) and the average for other teams (13.72),

4) What is the profile of our SDQ Cohort. Placement Type

From **Lowest to Highest average SDQ score**, placement types can be ranked in the following way:

- 1) **Friends/family approved as foster carers (6.16)**
 - 2) **Children rehabilitated to the care of their parent(s) (9.33)** very small numbers
 - 3) **Homes/Hostels (9.67)** very small numbers
 - 4) **Children in categories of Foster Care (13.3-14.9)**
- All of the above below DfE guidance for follow up.**
- 5) **Children's Homes (19.4) 10 children/young people**
(including 4 with Social Workers from CWD team)

4) What is the profile of our SDQ Cohort

➤ Placement Stability:

There is a small but significant positive impact from placement stability for SDQ Scores.

Placement Moves in Last 12months	Number of Children	Average Score
One move in last 12 months	69	13.65
2 Moves in last 12 months	27	14.26
3 moves in last 12 months	Smaller no	15.83

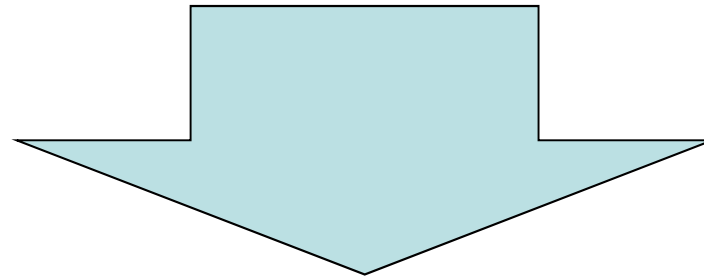
Same placement for 2+ years	Number of Children	Average Score
Yes	42	13.14
No	63	14.27

5) What do we do for Looked After Children and Young People whose SDQ indicates follow up is required?



5) What do we do for Looked After Children and Young People whose SDQ indicates follow up is required?

Child/Young Person, SDQ score 13+



Social Worker Consultation with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Looked After Children Team. Needs and professional support offered, reviewed any further support needed is offered

Social Workers work closely with CAMHS clinicians who are in the same office, as well as teachers, carers and other professionals



Drawing conclusions

6) Conclusions

- **It is important** not to place too great a burden on SDQ scores to gauge the relative emotional well being and mental health of our Looked After Children and Young People
- **CBC is doing well in** reducing the average SDQ score of its Looked After Children and Young People
- **17+ year olds** do not benefit from these and related processes, particularly unaccompanied asylum seeking children/young people (5 in cohort)

6) Conclusions

What have we done to promote Emotional Well Being and Mental Health?

- Improved the placement stability of children and young people who have been looked after for 2½ years plus.
- Develop a pilot project in one of the social work teams to use Education and Self completed SDQs alongside Carers' SDQs.
- The embedding of clinicians in the corporate Parenting Service including co-location with Social Work, Fostering and Adoption Teams.

6) Conclusions

What have we done to promote Emotional Well Being and Mental Health?

- Maintained a stable staff group and therefore continuity of allocated social workers.
- Closer working with Designated Teachers and their schools

7) NEXT STEPS

- 1) To investigate and make recommendations with regard to the Gender difference in SDQ scores
- 2) Full roll out of use of Educational SDQ's for all Looked After Children and Self completed questionnaires for all 11 to 17year olds, where there are scores of 13+ and ultimately for all Looked After Children and Young People with the purpose of:

▪

7) NEXT STEPS

3) Prompting discussion not so much about the prevention of mental ill-health but their emotional well being

- **How does the child or young person feel?**

4) Develop practice to ensure that the emotional well being and mental health needs of older Looked After Children and Young People are screened and addressed

5) Examine the particular needs in this area for looked after children and young people with the ethnicity of Traveller or Other mixed and develop a response.

7) NEXT STEPS

6) Continue with all activity addressing placement stability

7) Link and coordinate activity of this group of contributors with the task and finish group on Children's Emotional Resilience and Mental Health and Wellbeing led by Dr. Sanhita Chakrabarti

8) Improve choices for the support of good emotional well being and mental health for our Looked After Children and Young People

Central Bedfordshire Council

Corporate Parenting Panel

6 March 2017

Children in Care Council and Participation 2016-2017

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

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

Purpose of this report

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

RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to:

- note the content of the Children in Care Council's Annual Report 01 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

Council Priorities

The Children and Young People's Plan March 2015-March 2017

- Protecting vulnerable children.
- Early help and improving life chances – High aspirations for young people and their families.
- Improved Educational Attainment and Progress - Actively promote the participation of all young people in the development, delivery and evaluation of services –including targeted youth work, volunteering opportunities and careers information, advice and guidance.

1. Corporate Implications

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

2. Legal Implications

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

3. Financial Implications

The activities outlined were funded by the designated budget.

4. Equalities Implications

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

5. Conclusion and next Steps

Present the report to the Corporate Parenting Panel on 6 March 2017. The Annual Report makes explicit the work plan for next financial year – 01 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Appendices

Appendix A – Children in Care Council and Participation 2016/2017 – Annual Report

Appendix A

Central Bedfordshire Council
www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



**Children in Care Council and
Participation 2016 - 2017**
Annual Report



Aims and Objectives

The aim of the following report is to summarise and evaluate the work of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Participation Officer during 1st April 2016 – 31st March 2017.

The report is written with members of the CiCC and CiCC Ambassadors.

CiCC Members and Ambassadors were asked what has the CiCC achieved over the last year?

The Pledge – We are very proud of this piece of work, as we have helped in develop this from start to finish. There have been 18 young people involved in consultations along with Councillors and Senior Managers and we think it is a really good Pledge for our children and young people.

Aspirations Wish List – Our Corporate Parents are supporting our career aspirations and have supported us with arranging work placements, shadowing days and creating an Aspirations Wish List.

The Awards – The awards evening took place on Friday 21st October, the event was a great success and all the young people enjoyed seeing their photos in a frame.

The Frontline Programme – CiCC Ambassadors designed the training for the direct work session for the Frontline participants, 12 young people attended the day to deliver the training.

Representing Looked After Children at Meetings – Ambassadors have attended the LAC health improvement meeting, LSCB Voice of the Child and helped to facilitate a young peoples conference, CiCC Members and Ambassadors have attended the Corporate Parenting Panel, Corporate Parenting Operations Group, Commissioning Team meeting and Housing Solutions Meeting.

Working with the Commissioning Service – Young people have worked with the QA Manager to develop a young persons QA role.

Children's Commissioner Participation Group – members of our CiCC have attended the groups with the Children's Commissioner.

Eastern Region CiCC Group – CiCC members and Ambassadors attended an Eastern Region CiCC Meeting. The Children's Commissioner also attended the event.

Meetings with Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services and the Assistant Director – CiCC Members and Ambassadors presented the wording of the Pledge and gave an update on what the CiCC has been working on and promoted the Aspirations work.

Summer Fun and Consultation Activities – This year’s activities were supported by the Virtual School, 52 children attended one of the 12 activity days organised.

Peer Mentors – CiCC have continued to mentor younger looked after children (LAC), have completed informal consultations and represented the voice of looked after children.

Training Days for Assisted and Supported Year of Employment (ASYE) – CiCC members have worked with the practice educator to develop a training programme.

Consultation Events – Consultations on The Pledge, Life Story Work, Emotional Well Being, Personal Education Plans, Advocacy and Independent Visitors.

Supporting a CBC Internship for Social Work Student – Working with the Central Bedfordshire Academy of Social Work and Early Help Team to provide an Internship for a student from the University of Bedfordshire.

The Children in Care Council and Ambassadors

The new Children in Care Council is for children from the ages of 8 – 16, members attend activity based participation events and will attend specific consultation events or meetings as and when required. There are around 17 children who are the core members and now that the group has had time to form, the next stage of their development will be the introduction of more formal meetings which will take place on a regular basis during school holidays.

The Children in Care Council is being supported by the CiCC Ambassadors who are all over the age of 16, currently there are 13 young people in this role. The Ambassadors attend activities and events and also represent the voice of looked after children at meetings and events where our CiCC Members are not able to attend.

The Ambassadors have been active in supporting the Participation Work Plan and leading on specific projects. There are currently 6 Ambassadors working on the Young people’s QA role with the Commissioning Service, one of the Ambassadors has lead on the Pledge work and another one has been leading on the Life Story Project.

There have been 32 children over the last year that have been part of the CiCC or acted as Ambassadors. All of the young people have different experiences of the care system from their journeys into and leaving care, the types of care provisions for example some have experienced foster care whilst other young people have lived in residential homes or placed with family members.

Age	Male	Female	
8 - 16 yrs	8	11	
Over 16	6	4	
Over 21	0	3	
Total	14	18	32

Aspirations Wish List

One of the CiCC Priorities was to raise aspirations of our looked after children and care leavers which has been discussed at Corporate Parenting Panel. This has been very well supported by members of the panel who have provided young people with opportunities to find out more about chosen careers or experience new activities. For example Cllr Hegley introduced a young person who wanted to be a vet and invited the young people to a foal parade. Cllr Chatterley arranged a day at Luton Town watching a training session and to meet the players. Four young people will also be attending a match as the match mascots.

The initiative has been promoted by Cllr Hegley and members of the Corporate Parenting Panel and a Aspirations Wish List has been generated from the young people and their career aspirations.

Senior Managers have also support our young people acting as mentors to support aspirations, helping to arrange work placements and support with assignments. 'I am grateful for the support from Helen, Sue and Gerard during my college course, it helped having strong connections with corporate parents. I found my classmates had family to help and support them which isn't an option for me so it meant a great deal, going above and beyond to help me.' **CiCC Ambassador.**

Consultation Events

The Pledge – one of the Ambassadors has lead on this project as part of her college work placement. A workshop was organised for young people, members and senior managers. The groups were asked to think about what Central Bedfordshire should pledge to looked after children and care leavers. This included support from social workers and independent review officers, support with health and education and future aspirations. **See Appendix 1** for the feedback from the workshop.

Posters were created using the information from the feedback and presented to the Chief Executive and Director of Children's Service. **See Appendix 2.**

During the meeting the CiCC Members discussed their aspirations and gave some examples of where they would like support to explore these aspirations.

The information from the events and meetings was then used to write The Pledge. **See Appendix 3.**

The Pledge was taken to Corporate Parenting Panel and shared with Members and Senior Managers and signed off. The Pledge will now be designed by members of the CiCC along with the Ambassadors. There has been some delay with the design of The Pledge; however the CiCC Ambassadors are continuing to work on the design of the pledge and a younger version.

Life Story Project

From the event, Taking it to the Next Level Corporate Parenting event which took place in November 2015 the Ambassadors requested that Life Story Work be one of their priorities. One of the ambassadors agreed to lead on this piece of work and

wrote a research proposal which was agreed by the Assistant Director of Children Services Operations. There have been some delays with this project due to issues which have arose. The issues have been fed back to senior managers and the young person has met with the Director of Children's Services to share her experience. From this the local authority updated their policy and procedures relating to access to files.

'Even though the project has not gone to plan, using my experience to highlight some of the issues in the process and giving the feedback will improve the access to files procedures for other care leavers. This has also made me more determined to be the voice of our looked after children to ensure our young people get good quality life story through their journey of care so that young people don't need to access files to gain this information'. **CiCC Ambassador**

One of our CiCC members stated 'Life Story Work is so important as it allows me to get to know things and gives a meaning to my past'

Emotional Well Being

Members of the CiCC met with the Practice Manager for the Corporate Parenting Service, and contributed to a presentation which was written for Corporate Parenting Panel on Emotional Health and Well Being.

Personal Education Plans

The Virtual School attended one of the activity days and asked CiCC members to complete a survey on their Personal Education Plans. The feedback from the survey has informed the changes which have been made. This includes a request that there is a question on the document with regards to the Pupil Premium and how this is spent.

LAC Review Consultation Documents

Before a young person attends their Looked After Children's Review meeting they are sent a consultation document to complete which is shared with the Independent Review Officer and social worker. The information included in these booklets could be used for service development; part of the intern's role was to collate the information. For example there is a high number of young people who did not know what an advocate was. This information can then be passed onto the teams, including the commissioning team to ensure that information is shared with young people on a regular basis.

Members of the CiCC and Ambassadors think that this should be a priority going forward, working with the Independent Review Officers to look at the process of gaining this feedback for the individual but also for service development and how services can use this information.

CiCC Involvement

CiCC members and Ambassadors continue to raise their profile, have their voices heard and influence service development. They are often invited to be part of meetings or events. Currently CiCC Ambassadors attend the Corporate Parenting

Panel and contribute to discussions. During the school holidays CiCC Members also attended the meeting to give their views on the Pledge.

Other meetings which our Ambassadors or members attend include meetings with the Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services and the Assistant Director. The young people themselves report that they have good relationships with their Corporate Parents.

Corporate Induction

CiCC Ambassadors are part of the Corporate Induction Programme for new members of Children's staff. Young people prepare and deliver a presentation about the CiCC and the work they are involved in.

The Children's Commissioner and Eastern Region CiCC

Members of the CiCC were invited to attend an event with the Children's Commissioner and worked on a project which has produced a draft document called Asks from Children with care experience. It is hoped that this document will be used for all children in care.

Our CiCC has also attended the Regional CiCC event where our young people took part in discussions alongside the Children's Commissioner. The young people returned from the event proud to be part of Central Bedfordshire's CiCC. They felt proud of what they have achieved and came back with ideas of how to promote and improve the group further.

LSCB Voice of the Child Sub Group

One of the Ambassadors attends the LSCB Voice of the Child Sub Group and is a member of this group, along with the Participation Officer. Two Ambassadors helped to facilitate the young people's conference, gaining views from children who attended and supported the discussions.

Quality Assurance Young Peoples Role

Six Ambassadors have worked to co-produce a Quality Assurance Young People's Role. This is an exciting development for the young people to be able to support the Quality Assurance Manager in attending accommodation providers. The young people have started to coproduce their own inspection framework to go along side the QA Managers inspection framework. The young people gave a good insight about living in semi independent accommodation.

ASYE Recruitment and Training

The Learning and Development Team work with the CiCC Ambassadors and Members ensuring that young people are involved in the ASYE Training and recruitment. This year the team supported an Internship to work alongside the CiCC and Participation Officer during the summer break. The final year social work student undertook the 300 hour placement focusing on the Consultation Feedback, Summer Activities Programme and supporting the CiCC Ambassadors.

'My summer as an intern taught me so much, the work that is being carried out by Marie and the CiCC is crucial to ensure that the council continues to improve it's services for looked after children. The ambassadors were amazing young people,

who had great ambition and dedication to improving the lives of other young people who were looked after. They could share their experiences with the younger people, and give them advice that perhaps other people such as their social workers or foster carers, do not have the experience of to help. They were also in college and had other commitments in their lives, which made it even more inspiring that they gave up their time to help other young people. The ambassadors gave me lots of tips and advice on how to be a good social worker; I got continuous feedback and learnt how to build meaningful relationships with young people. They were honest and blunt but mostly kind and compassionate with great personalities.' **Amy Boorer, Intern.**

Frontline

The CiCC Members and Ambassadors continue to work with the Frontline Training Programme,

'In 2016, a group of children and young people from the CiCC came along to the Frontline Summer Institute to deliver teaching for the third year running. This year, they delivered work shops to groups of 35 student social workers as well as sharing some personal stories to the whole cohort of 150 students. Their input into our teaching is always invaluable and well received by the students and I continue to be impressed by the professionalism of the young people. What always stands out for me is seeing the young people grow and develop in confidence each year and how they deliver messages from children in care with passion and insight. Students' feedback has included comments on how humbling the stories are, how inspiring the workshop content is and how meeting young people who have had social work involvement fills them with hope and admiration as they begin their own journey into social work as a career. The academic team at the University of Bedfordshire are so grateful that the CiCC continue to support our work and that we can always rely on them to deliver such amazing messages through their teaching.' **Jo Williams, Senior Lecturer in Social Work**

The young people who have attended the training enjoy the opportunity and this year attending the University of Warwickshire was an experience for the young people to see the university. This year one of our younger members attended, who is 12 years old and stood delivering the session with confidence, giving great ideas to the participants and then spoke in front of the whole cohort. Our CiCC has been invited back again this year to deliver the training to 300 participants and we hope to take more of the younger group.

Annual Awards Evening

The Annual Awards evening took place on Friday 24th October 2016 in the Council Chambers at Priory House, there were over 120 young people who attended the event to receive their award which was presented by Councillor Hegley, Executive Member for Social Care & Housing.

The event was supported by members of the Corporate Parenting Panel along with the University of Bedfordshire. There were over 260 young people nominated by social workers, foster carers, school and residential staff, with 120 young people receiving their award on the night. The theme of the event was Oscars. The event was well attended by Members, Senior Managers, social workers and foster carers.

The Young Person of the Year stated “I felt very proud and happy to receive the award. I felt like a princess in my dress and I was so happy that my dad was there too with me. I felt as though I would burst with happiness”.

Young people from Maythorn, a residential unit for disabled children and young people, also attended the event, Manager Tom Smith gave feedback -

‘In terms of our young people as a whole, it was a rare and positive opportunity for our service to take our recognition of their achievements one step further. The setup worked really well for us with lots of things to do, plenty of space if needed and a really positive atmosphere, where everybody got genuine recognition for overcoming their individual challenges and achieving something special. The fact that our young people were as much a part of this as everyone else was testament to the inclusive nature of the event and made for an evening they all really enjoyed. This evening has been talked about in reviews, school meetings and other forums, and I feel it has led to an increase in recognition that what our young people achieve really is something to be proud of.’

Activity Based Participation

The Virtual School financially supported the summer activities programme, which enabled more days of activities to be organised and an increase in the number of young people attending. There were 52 young people between the ages of 5 and 15 who attended at least one of the 11 activity days. The activities included ice skating, pony days funded by the British Horse Society, cinema trip and a day at Rushmere Country Park funded by the Leisure Service. CiCC Ambassadors have also attended the events to act as peer mentors but to gain experience of working with younger children to support their own personal career development.

The activity days have also been well attended by social workers from the Corporate Parenting Team, which has been very positive for both young people and workers in developing relationships. We have also had some of the Independent Review Officers attending the activities and again this has supported the development of positive working relationships.

One social worker stated ‘the activities and events are so important for the young people, one of my young people doesn’t always communicate her feelings, but after spending time with the Ambassadors and other workers, they were able to pass on some information which enabled me to meet with the young person and talk about the things that mattered. The young person also felt able to say how she felt as she had been encouraged by the ambassadors’

Young people who are supported by the Children with Disabilities Team and the Family Support Teams have also attended some of the activities, for example trips to The Grove Theatre to watch a Disney production and the pantomime.

Central Bedfordshire Leisure Service has also offered free swimming passes to our looked after children and care leavers and their families.

University Of Bedfordshire

The University of Bedfordshire organised a residential for young people over the age of 18, to attend and explore options for future education, The feedback was positive and the young people who attended enjoyed the experience. The University continues to support our young people providing funding for the awards evening and additional support to individuals and groups of young people.

Challenges

The number of young people attending CiCC events continues to fluctuate, there continues to be a core group of young people who have developed a very strong working relationship with the participation officer.

Changes in the service can cause challenges for the young people and their involvement / commitment to the CiCC.

Times of meetings often means that only certain young people can attend, the role of the CiCC Ambassador is to represent the voice of other looked after children and care leavers however a number of young people are not able to gain experience in attending professional meetings as a CiCC member or Ambassador.

Future Priorities

	Timescales	Who is involved	Outcomes
CiCC Development	September 2017	CiCC Members and Ambassadors Marie Short Corporate Parenting Service	To have established groups for the CiCC and for CiCC Ambassadors / Care Leaver who meet on a regular basis and set their own priorities. To include regular CiCC Member recruitment activities / events.
The Pledge and Monitoring the Pledge	September 2017	CiCC members and Ambassadors Marie Short Corporate Parenting Service	To have a CBC Pledge to looked after children endorsed by the Corporate Parenting Panel. A quality assurance tool will be developed for young people to complete to monitor the Pledge. This will become part of the LAC review process.
Life Story Work For All	September 2017	CiCC Ambassador with support from identified social workers	To undertake the research project for Life Story Work to establish what is offered to young people and what could be improved. Our aspiration will be that all

			young people receive good quality life story work.
Aspirations Wish List	September 2017	Cllr Hegley and Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel Marie Short Corporate Parenting Service	To offer looked after children and care leavers the opportunity to explore different career opportunities using links through members and officers.
Entitlements for Looked After Children and Care Leavers	September 2017	Corporate Parenting Service Marie Short	To ensure that children and young people are aware of their entitlements during their time in care and when leaving care.

Further work will be carried out alongside the Conference and Review Team to look at the data collection from the consultation booklets and how this could be used for service development.

Continue to develop links with other teams who support looked after children, including the Children with Disabilities and Family Support teams.

Conclusion

Central Bedfordshire's CiCC and Ambassadors are an inspirational group of young people who continue to work to improve the services for looked after children and care leavers. The role of Participation Officer is supported by these young people and they continue to drive the work plan.

The CiCC have achieved a lot over the last year, the Ambassadors and CiCC members continue to be committed to their priorities and promote Central Bedfordshire Council in their work.

Relationships have developed between the CiCC and Ambassadors and corporate parents, including members of the Corporate Parenting Panel, this has further promoted the CiCC and has led to more involvement with services across the local authority.

The Awards are always a highlight for the CiCC and a time when they are able to celebrate their achievements with their Corporate Parents and other looked after children and care leavers.

The CiCC has continued to grow with the support of the social workers; this has ensured that the ambassadors are representing the voice of more of our children in care. Members of the CiCC and Ambassadors not only promote the work of the CiCC but also the social workers they work with and Central Bedfordshire Council for the support they receive.

We have been invited to be involved with this year's Frontline cohort and are proud to be one of the chosen CiCC groups to do this work. This year we will be training around 300 participants and offering more direct work with the students.

Being invited to attend external events like the Children's Commissioner's events and Frontline supports our personal development, gaining recognition from outside of the local authority reinforces our achievements and abilities, increasing our confidence and people skills and motivates us to continue our work.

'I have enjoyed all of the things that I have been involved with over the last year, especially my work placement, I attended meetings to improve services including the LAC Health Meeting. I also really enjoyed having the opportunity to design and deliver the training to ASYEs. The experience I have gained will help me with my career aspirations. I really valued the opportunity to work with the Participation Officer which gave me an insight into the role. I also had the opportunity to share my talent and performed at the Cheering Volunteering event which has helped to build my confidence.' **CiCC Ambassador.**

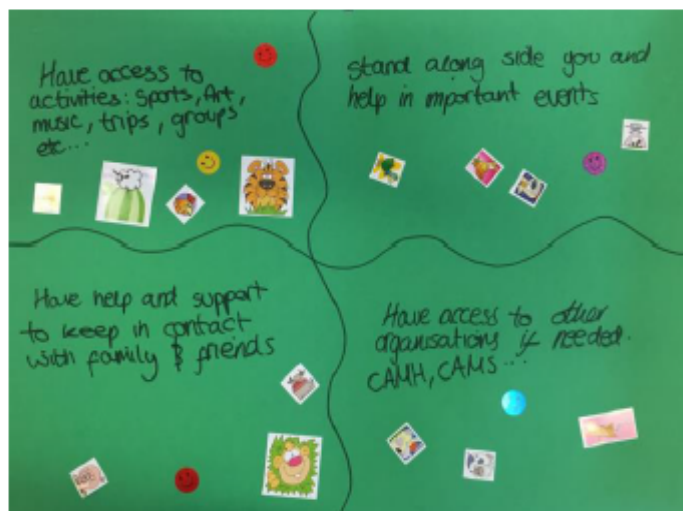
This year I have enjoyed working closely with the CiCC working on the Pledge and peer mentoring during the summer holidays. It has been a good experience to hear our young people express their views and opinions for the Pledge. Being able to lead on pieces of work as an Ambassador has boosted my confidence and enabled me to do things I would never have thought I could. I have had the opportunity to meet with different people and gain so much from working with people from the local authority and the people at Frontline.' **CiCC Ambassador**

Appendix 1

The Pledge Workshop 17th February 2017	
	The pledge workshop was developed by CiCC Ambassadors with support from the Participation Officer. 18 Young people and Councillors were split into working groups. The first activity was to build a spaghetti tower and there was a prize for the biggest tower.
	The Pledge Consultation, the groups were asked to think about what Central Bedfordshire should pledge to look after children and care leavers, young people were then asked to feedback.
	<p>Feedback from Groups -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Receive opportunity to have a peer mentor ➤ Be more involved in care plans ➤ Have specific information on different aspects of care, i.e. care plans ➤ Have social workers number/Duty social workers number incase young people need to talk to them ➤ Having a back-up social worker ➤ Help with Education ➤ Having the opportunity to develop relationships outside of contact with important family members. ➤ Having something in common with social workers ➤ Bond with Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) to form relationships ➤ Feeling and being listened to ➤ Children in care council (CICC) to continue ➤ Reliable access to services ➤ Strong relationships with Corporate Parenting Panel ➤ Profile book/life book/memory book for each child-written by the child with social worker ➤ Ensuring health for young people ➤ Celebrate Achievements ➤ Social workers to communicate in sensitive ways ➤ Summer Activities ➤ Going out on activities and trips with social workers ➤ Contact centers to be supplied with things young people need and like ➤ Food and things that young people enjoy doing, sports, hobbies etc. ➤ The Pledge ➤ Seeing a social worker longer than 30 minutes ➤ Being able to talk privately with a social worker ➤ Information on stages of coming into care at what ages ➤ Show children and young people it is not just them that is going through this. ➤ Feeling comfortable around social worker, not just talking about being in care, days out etc...

Appendix 2

The Pledge Feedback 2016



Appendix 3

The Pledge 2016

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 positive relationships with your allocated social worker and 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. 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.

Support along the way

We will ask you for feedback about the services you receive and use this to develop the service. 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.

Your journey and support along the way

Your health is very important; we will support you in staying fit and healthy. 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 will ensure you have their contact details. We will help you to develop relationships with professionals involved in your care. Being able to do activities with your worker is vital to build the relationships and being able to talk to your social worker privately will help build trust and rapport. 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. We will support your career aspirations and offer you opportunities to explore careers options.

Future Aspirations

We will continue to support you in your future goals and aspirations when you leave school. We will make sure you have all the right documents that you need such as a birth certificate, passport and national insurance number. The Leaving Care Team will support you up until you are 21 or 25 if in full time education. When you turn 18 you will have an allocated personal adviser who will support you through the transition to leaving care.

Central Bedfordshire Council

Corporate Parenting Panel

Monday, 6 March 2017

Update of the Adoption Support Fund

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

Advising Officers:

Gerard Jones, Assistant Director, Children's Services Operations
(gerard.jones@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Nickie Phillips, Practice Manager Adoption
(nickie.phillips@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Purpose of this report

1. To update the Corporate Parenting Panel on the Department for Education Adoption Support 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

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

Issues

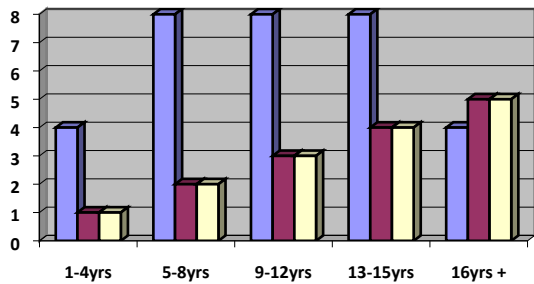
1. A Report about the use of Adoption Support Fund was presented to CSMT in January 2016. This report provides an update since then.
2. The Adoption Support Fund has remained available throughout this year to provide therapeutic support and intervention for adopted children and their family. From 1 April 2016 the Department for Education extended the criteria for applications to include Inter-country Adoptions (once the placement has been made and the child is in

England) and for Special Guardians who care for children who were previously looked after.

3. In October 2016, following a budget review of the fund the Minister of State for Vulnerable Children and Families advised of changes to the funds available for families. The letter advised that in 2015/16 the £19 million pound fund was accessed by 3500 families. In 2016/17 the available funding was increased to £21 million and a further £2 million increase was introduced in October 2016. However demand for support was twice the level forecast and in October 2016 the fund had already been accessed by more families than the total in the previous year.
4. Following discussions with the Association of Directors of Children's Services and the Adoption Leadership Board, an interim measure was introduced with immediate effect. This measure was the introduction of a £5000.00 'Fair Access Limit' which meant a maximum amount of funding was available per child for the remainder of the year.
5. The review did recognise that a small number of children may require an exemption to the Fair Access Limit and advised that funding will be available for such children in exceptional circumstances. In such cases funding would be available but only where the Local Authority agrees to 'match' funding. An example would be an application for £14,000.00 which would result in the Adoption Support Fund providing the 'Fair Access limit' funding of £5000.00, and if the Local Authority agree to match-fund, a further £4500.00 Adoption Support Fund 'top up' and £4500.00 from the Local Authority.
6. The scope for access to the fund has remained unchanged.

Central Bedfordshire Update

7. In January 2016 the Council had received £29396.26 from the fund which provided access to therapeutic services for six families.
8. Since the fund was available the Council has completed 37 applications with a total sum funding requested of £186,866.30. All applications have been successful and lead to the commissioning of therapeutic providers for families.
9. The ages of children funding has been applied for is shown in the chart below.



10. Therapeutic support is more beneficial the earlier it is accessed, hence the Adoption Team aim to make applications to provide support for young children early in placement. For the younger children the primary purpose for applications made to the Adoption Support Fund is generally to access therapy to support the development of the attachment relationships in the new family.

11. For children aged 8yrs and older the typical primary application made to the Adoption Support Fund is to undertake therapeutic life story work to assist them to understand their adoption story and develop a secure sense of self and identity. If this work can be undertaken before adolescents it lowers the risk of conflict within the family which can lead to the breakdown of the adoption placement.

12. The Council has a small cohort of children accessing adoption support aged 12yrs + who have complex needs due to multiple diagnosis of autism and/or ADHD, foetal Alcohol syndrome, education needs requiring support from an Education Health Care Plan and anxiety. Children with such difficulties often face exclusion from school and parent to child violence can occur within the family home if the parent struggles to understand and respond to the child's needs resulting in a risk of family breakdown. Due to their multiple needs such children are unable to access universal services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services or Children with Disability services as they often do not meet the eligibility criteria or the complexity of their needs means that the service is unable to be accessed. For the children identified, applications to the fund have assisted to commission a Child and Adolescent Family Psychiatrist who specialises in children with a wide range of mental health, social and educational difficulties to provide an assessment of need and recommend the best type of therapy to support the child and family. This is obtained on a spot purchase basis by accessing the fund. This input has significantly reduced the risk of a family breakdown and identified the 'best fit' therapeutic service and support to improve family life. However such children often require long term intervention to maintain family life.

13. The provision of regular ongoing respite often features within these cases and is either accessed through the adoptive parents support network or via local authority services such as fostering.

Council Priorities

14. Making effective use of the Adoption Support Fund ensures that the Council is able to provide a responsive service that protects the vulnerable and improves the child's wellbeing and quality of family life.

Corporate Implications

15. None

Legal Implications

16. None

Financial and Risk Implications

17. The Adoption Support Fund has assisted the local authority to provide therapeutic support to families and children in need where previously this provision was unavailable unless accessed via universal services. Access to such services was often limited as often the children did not meet the criteria or the services offered did not meet the specific needs of the children.
18. The local authority has continued to access the fund to purchase therapy for children and families following an adoption support assessment of need. The fund remains available for the remainder of 2016/17 and will have an annual increase in the total funding available for the remainder of this Parliament. However, as it has opened its criteria to intercountry adoption and special guardians, the funds available for adopted children and families will not be exhaustive and may require the continuation of a 'fair access limit' although this has yet to be confirmed. The financial risk of such a limit in 2016/17 will incur the requirement of 'match funding' for some applications incurring costs to the Local Authority.
19. At the time of writing this report, match funding has been provided for one case where funding was requested to continue a schedule of therapy and therapeutic parenting sessions. The child is 4yrs old with a history of birth parent drug abuse and neglect resulting in delayed development and attachment difficulties. The total application was for £9923.48. The Adoption Support Fund agreed funding for £7461.74 (Fair Access Limit of £5000.00 plus £2461.74) and the Local Authority agreed to fund the remaining £2461.74 to enable match funding to be obtained.

20. An example of high cost applications prior to the introduction of the Fair Access Limit have included amounts of £14000.00, £8200.00 and £34650.00.
21. There is a small cohort of cases that have required 'top up' applications when therapy proposed and funded by the Adoption Support Fund is coming to an end but further therapy is recommended. There will be some financial risk resulting from these cases as a further application is likely to be beyond the Fair Access Limit for that child within the year. However at this stage this is relevant only to applications within the remainder of the financial year 2016/17 pending any further notifications from the Minister of State for Vulnerable Children and Families regarding the fund in the budget year 2017/18.
22. The average funding requested at this time is £4917.53 which is within the current Fair Access Limit; however as reported earlier several applications completed before the limit was introduced have exceeded this which in future would incur costs to the Local Authority.
23. In addition the future availability of the fund after the current parliament is unknown.

Equalities Implications

24. 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. Accessing the Adoption Support Fund enables Central Bedfordshire Council to achieve better outcomes for children and young people with complex needs due to multiple diagnosis of autism, ADHD, Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, education needs requiring support from a EHCP and anxiety.

Conclusion and next Steps

25. Access to the Adoption Support Fund has provided opportunity to provide families with a therapeutic service to improve family life. This has assisted to reduce the risk of family breakdown resulting in the child returning to care.
26. Information about the Adoption Support Fund is provided to all those who enquire or request an adoption support assessment. Information can also be accessed on the Local Authority website to ensure fair access for all and maximise the use of the fund to support families and improve family life.
27. At present the adoption service carefully considers families needs and how the fund can be accessed to achieve maximum efficiency of fund

and therapy to improve family life. The majority of enquiries for support can be dealt with by providing information and advice including signposting to universal services and accessing advice from the virtual school service. However for those who require a higher level of input the service completes an assessment to identify the need. If therapeutic intervention is recommended an appropriate provider is identified and an application to the fund is completed.

28. Sustainability of the current level of service is of concern as the future availability of the fund is unknown. The Regional Adoption Agency remains in the development stage and the partnership is aiming to develop an adoption support service able to offer a high level of adoption support to all and is sustainable beyond the fund to reduce the financial risk to the local authority.

29. In the meantime development is being undertaken to consider how to use the consultation service available from the Looked After Children Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service to assist with adoption support referrals, plans and allocated cases. The aim of this is to provide early intervention to assist the development of positive relationships and attachments to provide positive family experiences and healthy relationships via a positive sense of self and identity.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

Monday, 6 March 2017

Fostering Agency Report - Quarter 3 (1 October – 31 December 2016)

Report of (Cllr Carole Hegley, Executive Member for Social Care and Housing
(carole.hegley@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Advising Officers: Sue Harris, Director of Children's Services
(sue.harris@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Annie Craig, Practice Manager, Fostering
(annie.craig@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Purpose of this report

1. Fostering Services Regulations 2000 requires the Fostering Agency to monitor and control the activities of the Fostering Service and ensure quality performance. Quarterly reports are presented to elected members in order to outline the activities in the Fostering Service so that members can monitor and feedback on the quality and performance of the Service.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to:

1. Consider and note the Fostering Agency Quarter 3 Report

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

1. This report has not been to or is planned to go to Overview and Scrutiny as no recommendations/decisions are required. Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to consider and note the Fostering Agency Quarter 3 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 regularly on the activities of the Service
3. This is the third quarter report for the financial year 2016/2017.

Recruitment of Foster Carers

4. During October, November and December 2016, a variety of recruitment activities and events took place in line with the Fostering Services recruitment strategy.
5. In terms of outreach work 2 activities took place. An information evening was held at Dunstable fire station in October and an information drop in took place at Priory House, Chicksands in November.
6. In relation to advertising, throughout this quarter we had a page sponsor with East of England Online with an editorial in their digital magazine. A 7 foot poster promoting fostering was placed in Dunstable Shopping Centre, the image used was relevant to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. An A5 fostering advert was placed in 'Info Central; Your guide to Council Services, spending and key contacts for 2016/2017'. The Fostering Service continued to advertise on a roundabout in Flitwick outside Tesco's store and fostering adverts were still being used on the back of school crossing patrol staff for schools across CBC. The Fostering Service continued to undertake some targeted recruitment for specific children living in Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes and Gloucester. Other advertising included an advert in a Flitwick paper which was sent to all homes within Flitwick including local shops and community buildings.
7. In October press coverage took place following the Celebration of Fostering event which had been held in September. Press articles of the foster carers receiving their awards were placed in various local papers such as Dunstable Gazette, Bedfordshire Times and Citizen, Biggleswade Chronicle, Beds on Sunday and Luton on Sunday. A live radio interview also took place with BBC3 Counties radio regarding a foster carer from the celebration event who had been fostering for 30 years. Other press coverage included a half page advert in Luton News and Dunstable Gazette regarding a planned information evening event.
8. Online posts have continued to be promoted during this quarter. An E-bulletin regarding the celebration of Fostering event was sent to 5120 subscribers of Central Bedfordshire's email alerts. Articles about the Celebration event and adverts were placed in Bedford Hospital electronic staff newsletter, Bedfordshire News on-line, Connect newsletter (sent to staff within social care, health and housing) and the Governors Essential newsletter (sent to all governors of schools and academies in Central Bedfordshire). Other on line advertising included placing profiles/adverts of 3 young people needing long term care in Adoption UK; Children who wait online.
9. In terms of social media various posts were made on Central Bedfordshire Council's Twitter account and Facebook page regarding a Fostering Information Evening and the Celebration of Fostering event. Similar posts were also placed on the 'Don't let Dunstable Die' Facebook page and 'About Dunstable' Facebook page. A further post was made on the

Fostering Facebook page regarding Sons and Daughters week (thank you cards and a £10 voucher were also sent to all birth children living at the foster carer's home). Targets recruitment and adverts were placed regarding 2 specific children appeared on Facebook users newsfeed in Northants, Milton Keynes and Gloucester. Various tweets and posts were made re CBC Twitter and Facebook accounts re. working with fostering agencies across England and forthcoming information sessions. Posts were also made on Beds Fire and Rescue Facebook page and Shefford and local villages Facebook page.

10. In September 2016 the Fostering Service introduced a Golden Handshake for any IFA carers (with CBC children in placement) who transfer to foster for CBC. This has generated a lot of interest from IFA carers. During this quarter one IFA carer transferred and there are a further three in assessment.
11. As a result of the recruitment that took place during this period we received a total of 21 enquiries, 7 in October, 9 in November and 5 in December (this is 9 more than in the last quarter). There were 18 Initial Visits during this period: 8 in October, 4 in November and 6 in December (this is 8 more than in the previous quarter). There were 12 application forms received during this period: 4 in October, 3 in November and 2 in December (this was 7 more than in the previous quarter). The best form of recruitment during this period was via the website.

Assessments

12. During this period 19 new assessments were started: 9 career carer, 3 Regulation 24 (temporary approval), 5 Family and Friends and 2 Special Guardianship Order (SGO) assessments. As of the 31st December 2016 there were a total of 15 assessments in progress: 11 career carers, 1 Regulation 24, 2 Family and Friends and 2 SGO assessments.
13. 3 Fostering households were approved, all as career carers, during this quarter.
14. During this quarter there were 5 de-registrations of foster carers, 1 family and friends carer resigned because she was unable to manage the care of the child placed with her and the child moved placement. 1 carer resigned as she was unhappy about concerns being raised with her regarding her care of a Looked After Child, 1 family and friends carer resigned as she had adopted her niece so no longer needed to be approved as a foster carer. The other 2 foster carer who resigned left for personal reasons.
15. As of the 31st December 2016 the Fostering Agency had a total of 103 fostering households (compared to 105 in the previous quarter), 81 of these were career carers.

16. In relation to the ethnicity of foster carers and children placed, there is a fair match of ethnicity with foster carers broadly reflecting the ethnicity of our children in care.

Ethnicity		
<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Foster Carers</i>	<i>Looked After Children</i>
White	89%	66%
Dual Heritage	1%	3%
Black or Black British	5%	3%
Asian	2%	1%
White Other	3%	3%
Traveller	/	1%
Gypsy/Roma	/	1%
Other	/	22%
	100%	100%

17. As of the 31st December 2016 there were a total of 124 children placed with in house foster carers compared to 72 with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's). The number of children placed with in house carers is increasing year on year. At the end of March 2014 the percentage of children placed in house was 46%, by the end of March 2015 this had increased to 54%, by the end of March 2016 it was 59%, and at the end of December 2016 2016 it was 63%. This increase has been achieved by the Service reviewing all existing foster carers to ensure we maximise their fostering offer. It has also been achieved by staff working with IFA carers to support and encourage them to think about transferring to foster for CBC and with work being done regarding our step down initiative to move children from residential care into a fostering placements where they have the chance to experience family life. Our aspiration is to increase this further to 70% as there will always be children that need to be placed out of the area or in IFA/residential placements. This will not only improve services to children in care and they will have local placements to better meet their needs but it will also decrease our reliance on more expensive IFA placements
18. As of the 31st December 2016 there were 140 Special Guardianship Orders in place (compared to 139 at the end of the last quarter). Although Special Guardian Order (SGO) carers 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 area Special Guardianship

Order (SGO) carers seek support with is in relation to contact, children's behaviour or support in financing respite or holiday activities.

Private Fostering

19. This report does not cover Private Fostering as the Fostering Service is not responsible for managing or reporting on this area of work.

Referrals/Placements

20. During October, November and December 2016 there were 17 new fostering placements made: 5 in October, 4 in November and 8 in December. This is a decrease of 4 new placements compared to the last quarter.

Training

21. During this quarter foster carers accessed a wide range of training opportunities to help them develop their knowledge and skills. The Fostering Service provided 10 specialist in house training courses which included: Supporting educational achievement, Understanding ADHD/ASC workshop, Internet Safety, Safer Caring, Child Care Emergency first aid, Permanent fostering and Supporting the health of LAC.

22. Foster carers also accessed training from the Early Years programme, these included; Forced Marriage, So called Honour based violence and female genital mutilation, Protective behaviours, Teenage relationship violence, Lone working and Crisis Intervention.

23. There were 22 foster carers also accessed e-learning training on the following subjects: Safer caring, E-safety, Equality and Diversity, Sexualised behaviour, Child Development, Foetal exposure to alcohol, Attachment and brain development, An introduction to Safeguarding Children and Awareness of child abuse and neglect.

24. As of the 31st December 2016 there were 71 fostering households that had completed their mandatory Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD's); 13 households were yet to complete their portfolios but still had time to address within the required timescales. 4 households were overdue in completing their TSD Standards and were outside the required timescale. Supervising social workers and the Marketing, Recruitment and Training Officer were providing additional support to help these carers achieve the standards.

Ofsted Notifications

25. 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 no notifications were necessary.

Allegations

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

Complaints

27. During this period there was 1 complaint made by a foster carer in relation to the Local Authority's decision to move children prematurely to their adoptive placement. This complaint was not upheld.

Compliments

28. During this period there were 2 compliments received from Independent Reviewing Officers (I.R.O.'s). 1 I.R.O. commented on how well the Fostering Team and Child Care team had worked together for the benefit of the young person. The young person concerned also thanked all professionals for their support. The other compliment was in relation to a foster carer where the I.R.O. praised the carer for her child focused care of a new child which helped him settle.

Annual Budget

29. Year 2016/2017 the Fostering Service within Children's Services had an annual budget of £1,179,630.

Reporting to Members – Legal Requirements

30. Regulations, associated Statutory Guidance and National Minimum Standards outline the requirements to report to Members on the management and outcomes of Services provided, in order that they can satisfy themselves that the Services provided are effective and achieving good outcomes for children.

Risk Management

31. Regulatory Risks: Failure to report to Members would be a breach of National Minimum Standards.

Staffing

32. The Fostering Agency 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 Fostering. This person monitors and manages the activities of the Fostering Agency. She supervises 2 team managers who have day to day responsibility for management of 2 fostering teams. During this period there were no new starters and 3 staff members left the Service (2 senior social workers and 1 business support officer).

Council Priorities

Children and Families First.

Working as One Team close to our community.

Being great Corporate Parents to children in care and care leavers – much more than care.

Being a well managed service and providing great public care.

Corporate Implications

33. Not applicable.

Legal Implications

34. 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

35. The report is an update on the service and does not have financial implications.

Equalities Implications

36. 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 report highlights ongoing efforts to recruit foster carers from diverse backgrounds and to provide training and development in relation to equality issues.

Implications of Work Programming

37. The 4 quarter Fostering reports feed into an annual report which is then presented to Overview and Scrutiny along with the Fostering Recruitment Strategy.

Conclusion and next Steps

38. During this quarter the service continued to focus on recruiting and assessing more foster carers. 3 carers were approved this quarter and another 8 are in assessment which means the Service is on target to meet its recruitment target of 10 new fostering households for this financial year.

39. As of 31st December 2016 63% of children were placed with in house foster carers compared to 37% with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's). The % of children placed in house has now stabilised between

61% and 65%. If the recruitment targets are met/ exceeded this percentage is likely to increase further. Our aspiration is still to place 70% of our children with in foster carers as there will always be a number of children who need to be placed externally in residential carer or out of the area

40. Long term placement stability of children is good as evidenced in our performance indicator exNI63 which look at the percentage of looked after children aged under 16 who have been looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years, who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years, or are placed for adoption. Our target in this area was 70% (high is good) and at the end of December 2016 we had exceeded this at 74%.
41. Short term stability of children has been more challenging to achieve as evidenced in our performance indicator exNI62 which looks at the percentage of children looked after with three or more placements during the previous 12 months. Our target in this area was 10% (low is good) and as at the end of December 2016 we were above this at 11.2%. Progress is being made in meeting this target as outlined by previous stats (13.5% in March 2014, 12.2% in March 16 and 11.6% as at the end of November 2016) but further analysis of this cohort is needed to fully understand why this target has been so difficult to achieve.
42. Other indicators of placement stability include the fact there have been no notifications made to Ofsted regarding any events/significant incidents, there have been no allegations made against foster carers and only 1 complaint made during this period. Foster carers are attending more training and developing their skills and knowledge which means they are better able to support the children in their care. When placements become fragile or disrupt the service is quick to respond in order to resolve issues and support carers appropriately.
43. In conclusion this has been another positive quarter with the Service still on course to meet its recruitment target and the number of children in in house placements continuing to rise. This means that children's needs are being met in local resources that better meet their needs, where there is more choice in relation to placements and placement stability has been enhanced because foster carers are receiving the appropriate training and support to help them provide a high standard of care to the children placed with them.

Appendices

None.

Background Papers

None.

Central Bedfordshire Council

Corporate Parenting Panel

Monday, 6 March 2017

Work Programme

Advising Officers:

Mel Peaston, Committee Services Manager
(mel.peaston@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Leslie Manning, Committee Services Officer
(leslie.manning@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

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

2016/17 Municipal Year	
16 January 2017 CANCELLED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption Fund (NP) • Update on the Pledge (MS) • Work Programme (LM)
6 March 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CiCC and Participation Annual Report 2016/17 (inc. Pledge update) (MS/CiCC) • Update of the Adoption Fund (NP) • Fostering Service Q3 Report (AC) • Virtual School for LAC Interim Report (JE) • LAC Health Report – Six Monthly Update NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (TMcD) • Work Programme (LM) • CiCC Presentation (MS/CiCC) EXEMPT ITEM
8 May 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption Agency Statement of Purpose, Fostering Agency Statement of Purpose (EW) • Corporate Parenting Action Plan – Annual Review (EW) • Work Programme (LM)
2017/18 Municipal Year	
3 July 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report 2016/17 (SK) • Fostering Agency Q4 Performance Report (AC) • Fostering Agency Annual Report 2016/17 (AC) • Adoption Agency Annual Report 2016/17 (NP) • Work Programme (LM)
4 September 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAC Annual (Health) Report (NHS – Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group) (TMcD) • Fostering Service Q1 Report (AC) • Chairman of Adoption Panel – Annual Report (NP/GF) • Work Programme (LM)
13 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering Service Q2 Report (AC) • Adoption Agency Interim Report (NP) • Virtual School for LAC Interim Report (JE) • Work Programme (LM)

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)

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