

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Council Chamber, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 4 September 2017

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

Cllrs Mrs C Hegley (Chairman)
Mrs A L Dodwell (Vice-Chairman)
N B Costin
G Perham (In place of Mrs A Barker)
Mrs T Stock
M A G Versallion
B Wells

Officers (voting)

Mrs J Ogle, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Carers (non-voting)

Mr D Thorne

Apologies for Absence: Mr P Albon

Officers in Attendance:	Mr R Bharkhada	– Interim Head of Corporate Parenting Service
	Ms A Craig	– Practice Manager, Fostering
	Ms S Keenan	– Practice Manager, Conference and Review
	Mr L Manning	– Committee Services Officer

Others in Attendance: Ambassador – For Children in Care Council

CPP/17/12. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CPP/17/13. **Members' Interests**

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

CPP/17/14. Chairman's Announcements and Communications

The following announcements and communications were made:

- The Chairman thanked all staff, the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and everyone else involved in the Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) inspection during the summer. She advised that there would be a formal event later in the week which would provide an update on the outcome of the inspection.
- The Chairman stated that the Ofsted inspection had revealed that some areas of service needed to be addressed and the Director of Children's Services was drawing up an action plan in response.
- The Ofsted inspection had lasted four weeks, was very thorough and had focused particularly on Looked After Children. Whilst indicating that he felt the Panel should be more challenging the inspector had acknowledged that Members were focused on their task.

CPP/17/15. Agency Report Quarter 1 Fostering 1 April - 30 June 2017

The Panel considered the report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing which outlined activity in the Fostering Service from 1 January to 31 March 2017.

Points and comments included:

- The carers working within the supported lodging programme were not approved foster carers though assessments were carried out and they could undertake foster carer training if they wished.
- The supported lodging scheme catered for 16-18 year olds and would be expanded once successfully established. The participants were carefully selected as it was acknowledged that the scheme was not suitable for all young people.
- A number of Looked After Children experienced three or more placements during a twelve month period. The reasons for this included an insufficient number of foster carers, some foster carers could only foster for short periods, placements could break down or the needs of the child were not being met. An attempt was made to ensure that there was continuity in other areas of the child's life in order to minimise the adverse impact of a move.
- That figures were produced each month on the movement of Looked After Children to new foster carers and the reasons for the need for a new placement were examined. The Interim Head of Corporate Parenting undertook to include a summary on this issue in the annual Fostering report.
- The employment stability of permanent social workers working in the Fostering Service with Looked After Children was very high at above 90%. The Practice Manager, Conference and Review Service undertook to regularly include data regarding this issue in her annual

report. However, Members felt that an initial report on LAC social worker 'churn' should be submitted to the next meeting if possible.

- The support available to the six fostering households that were overdue in completing their Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards. In response the Practice Manager, Fostering stated that the training took approximately 12 months to complete. She stressed that the quality of care provided by the households was very good despite them having failed to complete the training. The tier system for foster carers provided an incentive to carers to complete training as failure to do so could lead to a carer dropping a tier and experiencing a reduction in income. Nevertheless, problems arose because carers were sometimes too busy, or they had difficulty reading or English was not their first language.
- The costs in developing and recruiting social workers and the comparative costs of in house and agency foster carers.
- The absence of 'pressures' within the fostering budget to reflect the growth in population. The Interim Head of the Corporate Parenting Service referred to working within a five year timeframe for financial planning and that the Early Help and Universal Help programmes might reduce the numbers of children entering the system who required care.
- The delays experienced in the recruitment of staff through the Vacancy Management Process (VMP) and the causes of the delays.
- The growing number of Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) though this was now at a slower pace. The Practice Manager, Fostering commented that the Orders were viewed positively as they removed children from the care system. The Interim Head of the Corporate Parenting Service added that local courts were keen that children remained with family members. The use of SGOs also impacted on the numbers of children being available for adoption.

NOTED

the Fostering Agency report for Quarter 1.

RESOLVED

that, if possible, a report be submitted by the Practice Manager Conference and Review to the next meeting of the Panel on Looked After Children social worker 'churn'.

CPP/17/16. **MOMO App**

The Panel watched a video on the MOMO (Mind of My Own) 1 app which was designed to make it easier for young people to express their views.

Members were advised on the how the app was employed by young people and social workers and the benefits that arose.

Points and comments included:

- How easy and user friendly the app was to use.
- That the decision had been taken not to purchase the MOMO Express app (the version of MOMO for children and young people with learning disabilities) due to its cost. Instead the disability team would assist disabled children to use MOMO 1.
- The use of the app would be reviewed in due course to establish how successful it was.
- The possibility of personalising the app and using it or something similar with adults in residential care homes. The Practice Manager, Conference and Review Service advised that the app could not be personalised and she was not aware if something similar existed for use by adults.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the MOMO (Mind of My Own) 1 app be received.**
- 2 that an update on the use of the app be submitted to the Panel in twelve months.**

CPP/17/17. Work Programme

Members considered the report of the Committee Services Officer which set out the Panel's proposed work programme for part of the municipal year 2017/18.

The Panel was aware that it had already agreed to the possible submission of a report on Looked After Children social worker turnover (minute CPP/17/15 refers) and the submission of an update report on the use of the MOMO 1 app in twelve months time (minute CPP/17/16 above refers).

RESOLVED

that the Corporate Parenting Panel work programme, as attached at Appendix A to the report of the Committee Services Officer, be approved subject to:

- **adding a report by the Practice Manager, Conference and Review to the next meeting of the Panel, if possible, on Looked After Children social worker 'churn'.**
- **adding an update report on the use of the MOMO (Mind of My Own) 1 app to the Panel's meeting in September 2018.**

CPP/17/18. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

RESOLVED

that in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

CPP/17/19. **Children in Care Council Presentation**

The Panel received a presentation on the work that had been undertaken by the Children in Care Council over the last six months.

The Panel discussed the vital importance of staff stability on the wellbeing of children and young people, the difficulties that had arisen in the past when changes had occurred, the measures taken to ensure that there was no detrimental impact on Looked After Children and the involvement of the CiCC in any recruitment process for replacement staff.

The CiCC was asked to consider how it viewed councillors and their role and contribution so that the Panel could discuss these matters at a future meeting.

The Chairman referred to the Aspirations Wish List, the inclusion of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and the linking of the Aspirations Wish List with work experience and asked for feedback on this.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 11.18 a.m.)