

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at The Rufus Centre, Steppingley Rd, Flitwick, MK45 1AH on Thursday, 26 July 2018

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

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

Officers (voting)

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

Carers (non-voting)

Mr P Albon

Children in Care Representative (Co-Chairman) (non-voting)

Children in Care Council Representative

Officers in Attendance:	Ms R Coals	Principal Social Worker and Head of Professional Standards
	Mr A Coman	Head of Corporate Parenting
	Ms A Craig	Practice Manager, Fostering
	Ms S Griffin	Committee Services Officer
	Ms J Howard	Marketing, Recruitment and Training Officer
	Ms K Mathu	CYP Participation Officer
	Miss N Phillips	Practice Manager Adoption
	Ms S Rymell	Assistant Director of Safeguarding and Early Help

Others in Attendance: Press
5 Children in Care Council Representatives

CPP/17/1. **Minutes**

It was noted that the minutes of the meeting held on the 30 April 2018 were not available for approval.

CPP/17/2. **Members' Interest**

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

CPP/17/3. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The following announcements and communications were made:

- The Chairman introduced a young person from the Children in Care Council and explained that the young person would be assisting with the chairing of the meeting.
- The Chairman advised that further to discussions at the April meeting about a Children in Care Council Representative (CiCC) co-chairing CPP meetings, the Terms of Reference for the Panel needed to be amended to reflect this change, taking into account the following resolution at Executive in March 2010:

‘that the Monitoring Officer, after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services and the Director for Children’s Services, be authorised to approve future amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel where these have been recommended by the Panel itself’.

- The Panel were advised that alternative meeting dates were being identified to coincide with school holidays which would allow CiCC representatives to attend further meetings of the Panel. Outlook meeting requests would be sent to Members when the dates had been confirmed.
- The Chairman expressed her thanks to all those involved in the Children in Care Council (CiCC) Summer Ball and Awards Night on 20th July and for the contribution made by both Members and officers. The evening was well attended and had been a great success.

RESOLVED

that the Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Panel be amended to reflect that a Children in Care Council Representative would co-chair future meetings.

CPP/17/4. **Exclusion of 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 Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

CPP/17/5. **Children In Care Council and Participation 2017-2018 Annual Report**

The Panel considered the Children in Care Council's Annual Report for the period of 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 in conjunction with the exempt presentation which included a summary of the work of the CiCC and Participation Officer, CiCC Achievements in influencing change, challenges, and future priorities over this period.

Points and comments on the Report included:

- The CiCC continued to be involved in addressing policy decisions, contributing to consultations, support with recruitment and training, undertaking presentations at various forums and being given the opportunity to influence change.
- The CiCC is a diverse group of 24 core group members and their ages ranged from 11 to 25.
- The CiCC gives young people in care the opportunity to have a voice and be listened. A common factor is their experiences of being in care and their determination and commitment to make improvements. They also know that they are being listened to and that their work makes a real difference.
- CiCC members have been involved in the Ofsted single inspection of Central Bedfordshire Council where they were asked questions about their work and the support they are offered.
- The CiCC Participation Officer relaunched the 'Aspiration's Wish List'. Members of the Panel were asked for their support in providing opportunities for work experience within the community in line with the young people's aspirations.
- The Director of Children's Services suggested that as some councillors were school governors, one possible area of work could be to compile a list alongside the young people of 10 top tips on how to be a good school governor to give an understanding of what could be done better to support young people in care in the education setting.

- With regard to increasing the profile of the CiCC, an area of consideration could be to give a presentation at Governor and Teacher seminars.
- The CiCC Participation Officer detailed the various ways in which the young people's feedback is gathered as explained in her report.
- The view of young people and their Foster Carers about ways of keeping records of important events in their lives and significant objects in the form of a Memory Box or Life Story work were welcomed.
- The Foster Carer representative explained that babies were sometimes given their hospital wrist bands or were provided with a toy by hospital staff which was then put into a memory box. Photos of life experiences are also collected alongside any other physical or digital memories which are staying with the child
- One of the CiCC young person explained that discussions are taking place regarding ways in which the voice of other young people for whom English is not their first language can be heard even more. It was acknowledged that the young people will find it more difficult to explain what their views are when English is not their first language.
- The Head of Corporate Parenting explained that one of the central points of working with young people was to listen to their voices to ensure their views were incorporated in the care plans and support provided.
- A member of the Panel asked if future reports could include examples of how CiCC had helped other children and a brief outline of how this had been achieved.
- Clarification was sought on the number of CiCC representatives requiring additional support and what arrangements were in place to ensure that their needs were being met.
- The Head of Corporate Parenting thanked Foster Carers for the care they provided in opening their homes to children and young people, for listening to their wishes and providing support as having the young people as part of their family.

The Chairman thanked the CiCC Ambassadors for the very detailed report and for the work they had undertaken.

NOTED

the Children in Care Council's Annual Report 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 and the accompanying exempt presentation.

(Note:

- 1. Minute CPP/17/12 below also refers.**
- 2. At the conclusion of this item the Panel moved into public session)**

CPP/17/6. **Children in Care Council Presentation**

The Panel received a presentation on the work that had been undertaken by the Children in Care Council during the year.

Note: Minute CPP/17/5 above also refers.

CPP/17/7. **Impact of New Legislation on Young People Leaving Care**

The Panel considered a report of the Executive Member for Families, Education and Children on the impact of the new legislation introduced by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the support provided to the young people leaving care in Central Bedfordshire.

The Director of Children's Services explained that the wording of recommendations 2 and 3 in the report needed to be amended as the recommendations were not within the remit of the Corporate Parenting Panel. The recommendations would be referred to the Corporate Resources OSC and the Executive.

Points and comments included:

- The Director of Children's Services explained that the two key areas in the report were the exemption from council tax for Care Leavers in Central Bedfordshire and the duty of the local authority to assist Care Leavers in, or preparing for, adulthood and independent living up to the age of 25 in accordance with new legislation introduced by the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- The purpose of the report was to outline the holistic thinking around the support offered to young people leaving care in Central Bedfordshire and the need for a bespoke solution for each young person.
- Key message from care leavers included concern about becoming 18 and not having any support available.
- Members of the Panel were advised that the possibility of offering incentives to reward young people for their work at school or college was being explored.
- Central Bedfordshire Council currently offered Bikeability cycle training courses to equip young people with practical skills and understanding about cycling on roads.
- Central Bedfordshire Council's Care Leavers offer includes educating young people about how to budget in addition to how to access support about

debt management problems and to provide support for the process of applying for a passport,

- A member of the Panel said it was important for young people to have access to Wi-Fi technology and suggested that potentially a mobile phone company could be approached for this provision. It was acknowledged that this may be difficult as everyone has their preference in terms of how they access internet and which provider they use.
- Members of the Panel needed to be mindful of the costs outlined in the report of a yearly reduction of council's income of between £30k and £40k resulting from introduction of the Council Tax exemption and the total cost of £57k per year to increase the Leaving Care establishment from 7 Personal Advisers to 9.
- The Director of Social Care, Health and Housing reiterated that it was important that the implications of the implementation of the exemption from council tax for Care Leavers in Central Bedfordshire were understood and that each case should be looked at on an individual basis.
- Members of the Panel agreed that the figures given in the report and the financial implications needed to be explored in greater detail and asked that further costings be undertaken.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the impact of the new legislation be noted.**
- 2. that the proposed solution and financial implication in addressing the impact of the new legislation by increased the Leaving Care establishment from 7 Personal Advisers to 9 with a total cost of £57k/year be supported in principle subject to further costings being explored in greater detail and reported at the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel to enable the Panel to finalise the recommendations to Corporate Resources OSC and the Executive.**
- 3. that the implementation of Council Tax exemption (when appropriate) for Central Bedfordshire Council's Care leavers up to the age of 25 living within Central Bedfordshire Council's borders be explored in greater detail and further costings reported at the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel to enable the Panel to finalise the recommendations to Corporate Resources OSC and the Executive.**

CPP/17/8. Fostering Team Annual Report 2017-18

The Panel considered a report of the Director of Children's Services on the 2017/18 Annual Report for the Fostering Team. A copy of the report was attached at Appendix 1 to the Director of Children's Services report and a copy of the Foster Carers Charter was attached at Appendix 2.

Points and comments included:

- The Fostering Practice Manager explained that the number of occasions on which a children was admitted into the care of the Local Authority remained similar to that of the previous year (131 occasions compared with 132 in the previous year).
- 20 of the young people placed during the last year with in-house foster carers, Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) or in semi-independent living were unaccompanied asylum seekers (compared to 44 in the previous year).
- In this financial year the highest percentage of the children accommodated during the year were aged between 0 to 4 years of age in comparison to the previous financial year (2016/17) where the highest percentage of children accommodated were in the 16+ age category.
- The placement of siblings continued to be an area of challenge due to the lack of bedroom space.
- At the end of March 2018 the Service had exceeded the target of 8.5% set for this financial year (currently at 7.1%) in relation to the percentage of Looked After Children with 3 or more placement moves during the year.
- In response to the concerns raised about number of short term placement moves, the Head of Corporate Parenting explained that in some cases the placement moves are only changes in legal status not physical moves of addresses.
- The national concern about the ageing population of foster carers and that 10/15% due to retire in next 5 years continued. The average age of CBC carer is between 40-54, youngest being 23, oldest being 76. Research completed by CBC fostering service indicated that this was not currently an area for concern.
- There continued to be a year on year increase in the number of requests for Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs). The main support requested was in relation to contact followed by therapy for the children.
- A celebration of 50 years of took place in June and 3 fostering households were successfully nominated in the year and would be attending 1 of the Queen's Garden Parties during 2018.
- The new initiative 'Tea with Alex' gave foster carers the opportunity to meet with the Head of Corporate Parenting on a regular basis to help shape the service.
- The number of allegations against foster carers /Ofsted notifications remained low and no new complaints made about the Fostering Service. Compliments.

- The Service received 7 compliments during the year on a range of different issues. The Fostering Service also received very positive feedback from Ofsted inspection.
- A number of different schemes had been developed including the Supported Lodging Scheme, a Parent and Child Fostering Scheme and PACE Fostering Scheme.
- The Service had taken over some responsibility for assessing and supporting Private Foster Carers.
- Future work for the Service included:
 - the recruitment of more foster carers
 - the introduction a loan scheme for foster carers to enable them to extend/adapt their property in order to care for siblings groups
 - looking into a Support Care Scheme which is a preventative strategy to support children on the edge of care

Members were advised that Central Bedfordshire Council introduced a Foster Carers Charter in 2011, but this had now been reviewed in light of updates from the Fostering Network. The Charter sets out the Fostering Services and foster carers roles and expectations and commitments to each other.

The Fostering Practice Manager will be exploring the reason for the increase in the provision of regular respite placements from 50 occasions in the previous year to 102 this year.

Members of the Panel were advised that information provided in the annual report was in accordance with statutory guidance but data on Social Worker stability could be added if required.

NOTED

the Fostering Agency Annual Report.

RESOLVED

that the Foster Carers Charter be approved.

CPP/17/9.

Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2018- 2019

The Panel considered a report of the Executive Member for Families, Education and Children on the Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2018-2019. A copy of the report was attached at Appendix A to the Executive Member's report.

Points and comments included:

- Recruitment target met with 11 career fostering households approved and 2 supported lodgings households approved.

- Central Bedfordshire selected as one of the four Fostering Services to participate in a national project; the Fostering Network Muslim Fostering Project. The Marketing, Recruitment and Training Officer and Practice Manager for Fostering attended the closing conference to present Central Bedfordshire's good practice.
- New scheme launched – PACE fostering.
- The cost of training programme for adopters and foster carers was neutral last year neighbouring Local Authorities purchased training for their Foster Carers from Central Bedfordshire Council.
- Target for 2018 – 19 to recruit 15 career fostering households from a range of backgrounds and ethnicities and the implementation the parent and child fostering scheme.
- Recruitment will be a mix of traditional advertising (roundabout signage, radio, bus adverts, posters) with a strong focus on digital advertising such as Facebook, Google Dynamic words and electronic newsletters. Large scale advertising for the recruitment of foster carers recently installed on lamp-posts in the town centres of Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard and Biggleswade.
- Other areas of consideration included the introduction of Fostering Ambassadors, a review of the literature due to new schemes and a review of the duty process to improve the customer journey.
- Work was taking place on creating new video clips of Foster Carers sharing their experiences.
- The Marketing, Recruitment and Training Officer explained that the possibility of information about fostering and adoption recruitment being displayed on digital monitors had been discussed with GP and Dental surgeries in the local area. Suggestions of areas for further promotion were welcomed from CPP members.
- The Executive Member for Families, Education and Children and Lead Members for Children's Services asked members of the Panel to promote recruitment of Foster Carers and Adopters at town and parish meetings as part of their role as a Corporate Parent.

NOTED

the Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2018-2019.

CPP/17/10. **Adoption Agency Annual Report 2017/18**

The Panel considered a report of the Executive Member for Families, Education and Children on the Adoption Annual Report 2017/18. A copy of the report was attached at Appendix A to the Executive Member's report.

Points and comments included:

- Highlights for the period of 2017-18 included the membership of the Adoption Panel had remained stable and consistent with committed members and Chair; a joint annual training day had been completed with panel members and social workers; 18 Approvals of prospective adopters (1 more than previous period) and 14 children matched.
- Nationally, the recruitment of adopters had seen a significant reduction so the increased enquiries and continued approval numbers maintained by the Adoption Service in Central Bedfordshire reflected its effective recruitment and service delivery.
- 25 enquiries had been received about adoption support; 18 Adoption support assessments had taken place – a 50% increase in comparison with the previous year.
- 2018/19 Service developments included the recruitment of 20 adopters with a focus on foster for adoption, siblings and complex needs; early permanence via robust permanence planning and the design and the development of the Regional Adoption Agency.
- There were currently 5 children waiting to be adopted; 14 children in adoptive placements pending an order being granted; 5 children who had not been matched as yet.
- Members of the Panel were advised that nationally the number of boys and girls placed for adoption was 50:50.
- In response to the question raised regarding the reason for the delay in the time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family (nationally, the lowest rate was 325 days and the highest was 872 days), the Head of Corporate Parenting explained that there was a timescale of 26 weeks within which to complete care proceedings and that a child could not be placed for adoption until the proceedings had been completed. The legal parts of the adoption process have a large impact on the timescale.

NOTED

the Adoption Agency Annual Report 2017/18.

CPP/17/11. Adoption Recruitment Strategy 2018-2019

The Panel considered a report of the Executive Member for Families, Education and Children on the Adoption Recruitment Strategy 2018/19. A copy of the report was attached at Appendix A to the Executive Member's report.

Points and comments included:

- 18 households recommended for approval.
- 14 children considered for a match with prospective adopters.
- 26 children with a plan for adoption.
- Selected by First4Adoption to assist with the launch of National Adoption Week.
- Target for 2018 – 19 to recruit 20 adopters from a range of backgrounds and ethnicities.
- Recruitment will be a mix of traditional advertising (radio, posters, information evenings) with a strong focus on digital advertising such as Facebook, Google Dynamic words and electronic newsletters. Large scale advertising for the recruitment of adopters recently installed on lamp-posts in the town centres of Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard and Biggleswade.
- Other areas of consideration are:
 - the review of content on website pages
 - review of literature
 - design and development of the Regional Adoption Agency.

NOTED

the Adoption Recruitment Strategy 2018-2019.

CPP/17/12. 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 2018/19.

The Head of Corporate Parenting advised that following a meeting with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Panel to discuss the work programme, the majority of the previously unscheduled reports had now been scheduled.

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:

- **The addition of a report on Social Work churn for Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire;**
- **An update on the Peer Review / Ofsted recommendations at the next meeting of the Panel.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 2.05 p.m. and concluded at 4.10 p.m.)