

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 14 - Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford, SG17 5TQ on Thursday, 20 December 2018

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

Cllrs Mrs A L Dodwell (Chairman)
S Dixon (Vice-Chairman)
Mrs S A Goodchild
M A G Versallion
B Wells

Officers (voting)

Mrs S Harrison Director of Children's Services

Foster Carers (non-voting)

Mr P Albon
Ms T Rowlands
Mr L Youngman

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

Apologies for Absence: Cllr Mrs A Barker
Ms C Hegley, Executive Member for Adults, Social Care and Housing Operations (HRA)
Ms K Mathu, CYP Participation Officer
Mrs J Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Substitutes: Cllr Mr R Berry (in place of Cllr Mrs A Barker)

Officers in Attendance: Ms R Coals Principal Social Worker and Head of Professional Standards
Mr A Coman Head of Corporate Parenting
Ms S Griffin Committee Services Officer
Mrs S Harrison Director of Children's Services
Mr T Keaveney Assistant Director Housing Services
Mrs S Keenan Practice Manager
Ms T McDonald Designated Nurse for Looked After Children
Ms S Rymell Assistant Director of Safeguarding and Early Help
Mr N Stock Interim Head of Service

Others in Attendance: Children in Care Council Representatives

CPP/18/1. **Minutes**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on the 25 October 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CPP/18/2. **Members' Interests**

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

CPP/18/3. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The following announcements and communications were made:

- On behalf of the Panel, the Chairman welcomed the Children in Care Council Representatives and Foster Carers to the meeting.
- The Chairman advised that she had begun the process of starting to write to members about individual wish list aspirations. The entire list could be circulated if individual members requested it.
- Members of the Panel were advised that Mr Alex Coman, Head of Corporate Parenting was leaving the employment of Central Bedfordshire Council. The Chairman thanked Mr Coman for the work he had undertaken on behalf of the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- The Chairman welcomed Mr Nigel Stock, Practice Manager, LAC Service to the meeting. Mr Stock would be supporting future meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

CPP/18/4. **Annual (Health) Report (NHS Bedfordshire CCG)**

The Panel considered the report on the achievements, progress and challenges of the Looked After Children (LAC) health service in meeting the needs of Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) children and young people in care and care leavers during the period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Points and comments included:

1. There was a Designated Doctor in post to undertake Initial Health Assessments (IHA's). However, if the Doctor was not available, IHA's could be undertaken by an appointed paediatrician.
2. In response to a question raised about the possible effect on health services resulting from the potential merger of the Milton Keynes, Bedford

and Luton Clinical Commissioning Groups, the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children explained that the Clinical Commissioning Group had appointed a Joint Accountable officer in November 2018 and interviews for Senior Management posts had taken place in December. There would be a transition period after the merger and dedicated professionals in each service area which would be reviewed going forward. It was hoped that the merger would result in services for young people becoming more efficient. Of note, there had always been good communication between Milton Keynes and Bedfordshire in terms of children and safeguarding.

3. Mental Health Services in Central Bedfordshire consisted of psychiatrics, the CAHMS team and social workers with an interest in psychology. The transformation plan for these services included a single point of access being put in place. CHUMS was also part of this process.
4. The Designated Nurse for Looked After Children advised that further analysis and clarification would be sought from colleagues into the reason why the Looked After Children's CAMHS Service Performance Data 2017-18 showed 468 Direct Patient Contact with a DNA rate of 4.7% which lower than any other quarter.
5. Members of the Panel were advised that the Health Passport is paper record of the medical and healthcare history of a Looked After Child held by the local authority. The document is child specific as the young person decides what information they want included on their Health Passport. The document can be a useful source of information for health and appointments. The Health Passport can be requested by the young person during Review Health Assessment for their final meeting.
6. Following a recent workshop held by the Looked After Children Health Team discussions are planned with young people to consider the content and presentation of their Health Passport.
7. The Panel were advised that it would be useful if the Health Passport could be shared with Foster Carers.
8. The Practice Manager, LAC Service explained that the age threshold nationally for the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire was 17. However, in Central Bedfordshire this was applied at the age of 14.
9. The Panel noted that the SDQ average score for CBC LAC children had decreased by 1.3% in 2017/18 to 11.9%. A request was made for the data to broken down into gender and under and over 11's to give the Panel a greater understanding of the figures being presented.

NOTED

the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group's Looked After Children's Health Annual Report Central Bedfordshire Council.

CPP/18/5. **Agency Report Quarter 2 Fostering 1 June – 30 September 2018**

The Panel considered a report outlining the activity in the Fostering Agency during Quarter 2.

Points and comments included:

1. In response to the question raised about average time period to arrange an alternative placement, the Head of Corporate Parenting explained that expectation was that at least 28 days' notice would be received in order to give sufficient time to find an alternative placement. However, if there was an issue which needed to be resolved immediately, a placement move could sometimes take place at short notice. If a foster carer moved out of the area and was unable to take the young person with them, the Resource and Placement Team would look at finding another suitable placement immediately.
2. The Head of Corporate Parenting advised that the Assistant Director Children's Services was notified of all complaints received about the Fostering Service on a weekly basis along with status of the complaint. Complaints were also logged in the annual report received from the Customer Relations Team.
3. The Practice Manager, Fostering explained that the recruitment of foster carers from diverse ethnic backgrounds was an issue for other local authorities as well as in Central Bedfordshire. The current focus of foster carer recruitment was various faith groups and different diversities. Work taking place included discussions with the fostering network to look at the recruitment of foster carers from the Muslim faith and also with existing foster carers to look at ways of addressing the myths around foster care from other ethnic backgrounds.
4. The recruitment of foster carers continued which included adverts in schools and via parish council. Visits could be arranged to organisations and faith groups such as church congregations. Suggestions of other opportunities of promoting the fostering service were welcomed.
5. A comprehensive training programme was in place for all foster carers to ensure a continuation of growth and development. This was in addition to the core training programme provided during the first few years of becoming a foster carer.
6. The Practice Manager, Fostering explained that a tier level of payment of allowances for foster carers had been introduced in Central Bedfordshire approximately three years ago. Foster carers were required to attend mandatory training on an annual basis in order to maintain their current allowance tier or to move to the next tier.
7. The level and amount of training for foster carers had increased significantly and placement stability had improved. The personal development plan for each foster carer was reviewed on an annual basis which included looking at the appropriate training to support the foster carer.

8. In response to a question raised about identifying the specific cultural needs of the children rather than general approach which might not be the match of the child, the Practice Manager Fostering explained that in general the cultural background of the child was known from the initial referral and the needs of the child were looked at in order to try and match a foster carer accordingly.
9. In response to a question raised about anticipating the need for foster carers from different cultural backgrounds and having carers in place, the Corporate Parenting Manager advised that the recruitment strategy for foster carers was reviewed on an annual basis and adapted accordingly taking into account the make-up of the Looked After Children population and possible effects from crisis in other areas of the world. Training for existing foster carers included culturally sensitive areas. Looked After Children with dual heritage was an area of pressure which needed to be targeted as part of the recruitment strategy for foster carers.
10. The Practice Manager Fostering explained that existing foster carers were being upskilled and were put in contact with other foster carers from a similarly cultural background for support. A resources pack had been compiled for unaccompanied young asylum seekers which covered information such as culture, customs and food.
11. The Practice Manager Fostering advised that children in foster care had previously been involved in the training of foster carers and the expansion of involvement in this process through the Children in Care Council was welcomed.
12. In response to concerns raised about the continued increase in the number of Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) put in place, the Corporate Parenting Manager explained that there had been concerns when SGOs were first introduced but Courts had now become more considerate in issuing these. The current rate of SGOs for Central Bedfordshire was 10/15 year rather than 40. SGOs were a recommendation from the social worker supported by the family guardian and were put in place when this was felt to be right for that particular child. The final care plan and recommendations were signed off by the Head of Corporate Parenting prior to proceeding to the Court.

NOTED

The Fostering Agency Quarter 2 report.

CPP/18/6. Exclusion of the Press and Public

To exclude the Press and Public from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that its consideration involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

CPP/18/7. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking young person as Looked After Children – Spotlight Report

The Panel received an exempt report on the way the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking young people become Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire.

On conclusion of the consideration of exempt minute item CPP/18/8, the meeting was open to the Press and Public.

CPP/18/8. Looked After Children Social Worker Stability

The Panel considered a report providing further detail regarding social worker stability for Looked After Children.

Points and comments included:

1. The Head of Professional Standards and Principal Social Worker explained that there might be the need to use agency staff in some cases such as a social worker being off work for an extended period of time due to sick leave, if there was a temporary arrangement in place due to a gap in provision or the social work team was not at full complement.
2. The Head of CP explained that where a social worker has been recruited from outside CBC there could be a delay in their start date due to outstanding leave or work commitments. In these cases team members cover wherever possible, with management oversight of caseloads.
3. The Head of Professional Standards and Principal Social Worker explained that every effort was made to ensure that a young person was made aware of a change to their social worker in order to try and alleviate any possible effects that might occur from the change. There was some consistency in terms of the Independent Reviewing Officer not changing during the young person's journey and in a majority of cases, the team manager also remained the same.
4. The Director of Children's Services explained that in Central Bedfordshire the teams were small enough to have a shared knowledge of the children within the service. The stability, continuity and co-working across teams had also improved greatly.
5. The care plan in place for each young person is monitored on a regular basis through Looked After Children reviews. Part of this process was to challenge consistency, continuity and communication to ensure the best outcome was achieved for the child.
6. The Head of Corporate Parenting explained that the Children's Commissioner produced an annual report on the stability of the lives of children in care. The report included data that could be used for statistical benchmarking against neighbouring local authorities and could be presented at a future meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel for information.

NOTED

Looked After Children Social Worker Stability in Central Bedfordshire.

CPP/18/9. **Work Programme**

Members considered the report of the Committee Services Officer which set out the Panel's proposed work programme for the part of the municipal year 2018/19.

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 following amendments:

8 April 2019

- **Spotlight reports – LAC transition to Adults' Social Care**
- **Presentation on the overview of the process of a Health Passport**
- **Update on children's services as part of transformation.**

24 October 2019

- **Children's Commissioner annual report on the stability of the lives of children in care.**

Standing agenda items

- **Understanding our LAC population**
- **Children in Care Council update**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.30 p.m.)