

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 14 - Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford, SG17 5TQ on Monday, 11 February 2019

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

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

Officers (voting)

Mrs S Harrison Director of Children's Services

Carers (non-voting)

Mr P Albon

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

Apologies for Absence: Ms S Rymell, Assistant Director of Safeguarding and Early Help
Cllr M A G Versallion

Members in Attendance: Cllr D Bowater (in place of Cllr Mrs A Barker)

Officers in Attendance:	Ms R Coals	Principal Social Worker and Head of Professional Standards
	Ms S Griffin	Committee Services Officer
	Mrs S Harrison	Director of Children's Services
	Mr T Hoyle	Assistant Director of Strategic Commissioning
	Ms M Short	Participation Officer, Professional Standards
	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 20 December 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

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

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

It was noted that a number of Corporate Parenting Panel Members were School Governors.

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

The following announcements and communications were made:

- The Chairman advised that she had written to Members regarding the aspirations wish list for children in care asking for suggestions for everyday opportunities such ice skating or work experience. The opportunities did not have to be a large financial or time commitments. The full list would be circulated to Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel as requested.
- The Chairman thanked officers and young people for their involvement and hard work during the recent Ofsted Focused Visit.

CPP/18/4. **Understanding our population of Looked After Children and Young People**

The Panel considered a report on the Looked After Children and Young People population in Central Bedfordshire.

Points and comments included:

1. The Interim Head of Service, Corporate Parenting explained that 43.35% of LAC were placed with an Independent Foster Carer. The aspiration for the Local Authority was for this figure to be 70% or two thirds of the total LAC population taking into account the needs of the child(ren).
2. In response to clarification requested of the placement type independent/semi-independent, the Interim Head of Service, Corporate Parenting explained that this type of accommodation provided a degree of support for children in care aged 16-17 years of age.
3. In terms of quality assurance, a designated Quality Assurance officer had been appointed within Central Bedfordshire Council to ensure of the level of

accommodation being provided. Engagement with officers in housing support team had also increased.

4. In response to a question raised about whether young people were encouraged to remain in foster carer longer, the Interim Head of Service, Corporate Parenting explained that young person remained with their foster carer depending on their needs. However some young people wanted to live in a supported environment but more independently.
5. The Youth Offending Service were involved with a very small number of Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire. Joint working took place with Social Workers to resolve any issues as quickly as possible depending on the level of offending.
6. The discrepancy in the figures for the total IFA Foster placements (101), total In House foster placements (130) against the LAC in Foster Placements (233) would be clarified.
7. National and statistical neighbours would be added to future reports as a benchmark for performance.

NOTED

the report on the Looked After Children and Young People population in Central Bedfordshire.

CPP/18/5. **Children in Care Council update**

The Panel received a presentation from the Children in Care Council in conjunction with exempt Minute Item CPP/18/14.

CPP/18/6. **Six Monthly Report in respect of the Adoption Service 1 April – 30 September 2018**

The Panel considered the six monthly report in respect of the Adoption Service for the period of the 1 April to 30 September 2018.

Points and comments included:

1. The Practice Manager, Central Bedfordshire Adoption Service explained that the 4 requests received for an intermediary service were from adoptive adults that asking for support contacting birth family members.
2. In response to clarification requested of Central Bedfordshire having 3 approved adopters where no link had been identified and family findings were in progress, the Practice Manager, Adoption Service explained that adopters had been approved by a Panel but a match had been identified with a child.

3. The Practice Manager, Central Bedfordshire Adoption Service explained that since April 2018, 57 young people had ceased to be looked after and of these, 5 children were adopted. The reasons for ceasing to be looked after included the young person returning home.
4. In response to a question raised about the number of applications to the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) having significantly increased in this period compared with the same period in 2017-18 and being able to meet demand going forward, the Practice Manager, Adoption Service explained that until the end of the financial year 2019 to 2020 the ASF will have 2 fair access limits: £2,500 per child per year for specialist assessment and £5,000 per child per year for therapy. The process for approval had become more stringent but the majority of applications were still accepted. An application for match funding could be made to the Resource Panel if needed. The funding arrangements after 2020 were as yet unknown.
5. The Practice Manager, Adoption Service explained that packages to provide financial support to enable families/ parents to adopt siblings or more than one child could be looked into if requested.

NOTED

the six monthly report in respect of the Adoption Service for the period of the 1 April to 30 September 2018.

CPP/18/7.

Support for Care Leavers - Personal Advisor

The Panel considered a report outline the new extended statutory legislation and demographic growth pressures on the support available to young people leaving care in Central Bedfordshire from their allocated Personal Advisor.

Points and comments included:

1. The Interim Head of Service Corporate Parenting explained that although there was some handover in place during the transfer of responsibility for working with a young person from their Social Worker to their Personal Advisor, best practice would be for a young person to transition from their Social Worker to a Personal Advisor between the ages of 17 and a half to 18, with a period of joint working during the transition.
2. Feedback from the Children In Care Council Representatives was that a balance of younger and older and a gender mix of Social Workers and Personal Assistants was needed depending on the young person as it can be quite difficult for a young person to bond with a young Social Worker/Personal Assistant in comparison with an older person with more life experience.
3. The report advises that the percentage of Care Leavers in education, employment or training has consistently been close to or exceeded 70%. It would be good if 100% could be achieved.

4. The Head of Professional Standards and Principal Social Worker referred to feedback from Children in Care Council Representatives about 'good' Social Workers and Personal Assistants and advised that it would be helpful to have clarification of this form of wording.
5. The proposal for additional Personal Advisor support was welcomed as this role provided young people with vital additional support, at fundamental times such the transition into adulthood.

NOTED

the proposal for additional Personal Advisor support to 'meet legislative changes bringing extra statutory duties for Care Leavers aged 21-25' for which a budget has been built into the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2019/20, subject to approval by full Council in February 2019.

CPP/18/8. **Eastern Region Peer Review Looked After Children and Permanence**

The Panel considered a report providing members with details on the outcomes of the November 2018 Eastern Region Peer Review of Looked After Children and Permanence.

The following points and comments were made:

1. The Director of Children's Services explained that the recent Ofsted visit had been very focused. Representatives from Ofsted had met with Social Workers and case files had been reviewed during the visit. Meetings with managers, young people or partner agency representatives as not been requested.
2. The Head of Professional Standards and Principal Social Worker explained that during the three week Ofsted inspection in June – July 2017, Ofsted representatives had met with foster carers and that no areas of vulnerability had been identified. As part of the Ofsted inspection in June-July 2017, it was a statutory requirement to request feedback from foster carers on the quality of support received from the local authority.
3. Following feedback from a previous Ofsted inspection, challenge from Corporate Parenting Panel members had increased around reports, data and performance statistics presented and the actions taken. A representative from the Children in Care was now Co-Chair of the Panel and input from Children in Care Council representatives had also increased.
4. It would be helpful for all members to develop their questioning and scrutiny skills further and to look at guidance for Corporate Parenting Panels from other outstanding local authorities as examples of good practice.
5. A member of the Panel advised that previously Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel had been involved in events or days out in order to get to know young people better and asked how Members could become more involved and support young people. The Children and Young Peoples

Participation Officer for Children in Care explained that discussions were taking place about a possible event in April as part of the new leaving care group in April such as a treasure hunt. The date for the event would be circulated once it had been confirmed.

NOTED

the report providing members with details on the outcomes of the November 2018 Eastern Region Peer Review of Looked After Children and Permanence.

RESOLVED

that a plan be formulated in response to the findings of the Peer Review.

CPP/18/9. **Ofsted Action Plan update**

The Panel considered a report on the Ofsted Action Plan 2017-18.

This item was considered in conjunction with Minute Item CPP/18/8 Eastern Region Peer Review Looked After Children and Permanence.

NOTED

the report on the Ofsted Action Plan 2017-18.

RESOLVED

that the Ofsted Action plan be completed.

CPP/18/10. **Verbal update from the Director of Children's Services**

The Panel received a verbal update from the Director of Children's Services on matters of interest.

Points and comments included:

- An Ofsted Focused Visit had recently taken place. The official letter due to be published at the end of February would be shared with members of the Panel.
- Notification of the dates of a SEND inspection was awaited.
- Central Bedfordshire Council is part of Eastern Region Peer Review scheme. As part of the self-evaluation process Children's Services had been paired with Southend Borough Council to look at ways of delivering services to teenagers. The possibility of arranging a visit to Southend was being discussed to look at good practice.

- The Children and Young Peoples Participation Officer for Children in Care explained that joint working is taking place with the Children in Care Council Eastern Region. A current area of work was looking at top 10 tips for social workers.

CPP/18/11. **Work Programme**

Members considered the report of the Committee Services Officer which set out the Panel's proposed work programme for 2019.

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 on LAC Transition to Adult Social Care and Children with Disabilities as LAC be combined and presented as one report.**
- **Leaving Care; Financial support for young people leaving care be moved to the May / July meeting**

Unscheduled items

- **A report on supported accommodation for 16-17 year olds be added to work programme.**

CPP/18/12. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

CPP/18/13. **Final Report Virtual school for Looked After Children 2017/18**

The Panel considered an exempt report providing information on the role of the Virtual School and the unvalidated outcomes at Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 for Looked After Children (LAC) in Central Bedfordshire in the Academic Year 2017/18.

NOTED

the interim report for the academic year 2017/18 and the progress made to date.

CPP/18/14. **Children in Care Council update**

The Panel received an exempt presentation from the Children In Care Council in conjunction with Minute Item 6 CPP/18/5

NOTED

the exempt presentation from the Children in Care Council.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.25 p.m.)

Chairman

Dated