

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 14, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 14 May 2012

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

Cllrs M A G Versallion (Chairman), A L Dodwell (Vice-Chairman), Mrs A Barker, Mrs S A Goodchild, Mrs D B Gurney and B Wells

Co-opted Foster Carer Representatives (non-voting)

Mrs C Freestone and Mrs H Phillips

Apologies for Absence: Cllr N B Costin
Mrs E Grant
Mrs J Ogley
Cllr N J Sheppard

Members in Attendance: Cllr P N Aldis

Officers in Attendance: Ms Y Corden – Interim Assistant Director,
Children's Services Operations
Mr L Manning – Committee Services Officer
Mrs C Parry – Head of Service, Safeguarding and
Children in Care
Ms M Short – Participation Officer

Others in Attendance: Ms E de Zoete – Consultant in Public Health, NHS
Bedfordshire
Representatives – Children in Care Council

CPP/12/1 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 5 March 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CPP/12/2 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

There were no announcements or matters of communication from the Chairman.

CPP/12/3 **Members' Interests**

a) **Personal Interests:-**

None.

b) **Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-**

None.

CPP/12/4 **Children in Care Council - Presentation**

The Panel received a presentation by two representatives of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) which set out the proposed arrangements for the Looked After Children Awards on 28 September 2012 and the Fun Day 2012.

Turning first to the Looked After Children Awards, a Member suggested that electronic nominations be allowed in addition to the use of paper cards for this purpose. The Member also requested that consideration be given to introducing an award for those children who welcomed foster children into their homes.

In response to a Member's query the Head of Service, Safeguarding and Children in Care explained that the awards ceremony itself would start at 6.00 p.m. and finish by 7.00 p.m. Then, between 7.00 p.m. and the end of the awards evening at 9.00 p.m., there would be an opportunity for activities and discussion. She explained that the awards themselves were not age related but based on a range of different categories.

In connection with the use of the Council Chamber in Priory House as the venue for the awards evening, a Member referred to the forthcoming technical upgrades to the presentation and camera equipment in that room.

In response to a query from the Chairman on the possibility of greater publicity for the awards, the Head of Service, Safeguarding and Children in Care stated that information on the evening was currently included in the Council's internal electronic staff newsletter 'Be Inspired' but the Panel could consider whether, subject to the views of the individual award winners, it would wish to see their details circulated more widely. Members indicated their awareness of the need to respect the privacy of the young people concerned. The Participation Officer suggested that a display featuring the views of the young people, but which did not divulge any confidential information, could be shown at Chicksands whilst the Head of Service, Safeguarding and Children in Care added that artwork and work for the awards ceremony could also be included. The co-opted foster carer representatives referred to the Christmas tags which contained messages from Looked After Children and it was suggested that these could be typed up in either leaflet or book form for display. The Head of Service, Safeguarding and Children in Care undertook to give further attention to these suggestions.

Consideration was given to the possible publication of the award categories. The meeting noted that the list was quite long as the award was personal to each young person. The Participation Officer explained that nominations were encouraged for the widest range of achievements, not just those that were academically related. The Head of Service, Safeguarding and Children in Care explained that the publication of the award categories could be done electronically.

The meeting noted that most of the 130 nominations for the 2011 awards had been received from social workers. The Participation Officer stated that an effort would be made this year to encourage greater input from foster carers.

The meeting noted the supervisory arrangements for the awards evening.

Turning next to the arrangements for the Fun Day the CiCC representatives advised the meeting that, although the Weatherly Centre had originally been booked as the venue, it had subsequently been established that the Centre lacked sufficient outdoor space for the planned events. Alternative venues were therefore being sought. The meeting noted the date of the Fun Day would depend on the venue that was chosen. A Member suggested that the CiCC consider the sports pavilion and associated outdoor facilities at Sandy.

Members noted that a raffle would be used at the Fun Day to raise money for a local charity. The CiCC representatives advised that the Keech Hospice was the chosen charity.

The possibility of sponsorship for both events was considered. The meeting acknowledged that some organisations would be willing to undertake sponsorship though some concerns were expressed at this proposal.

NOTED

the arrangements for the Looked After Children Awards 2012 and the Fun Day 2012.

CPP/12/5

Six Month Health Report: Health of Looked After Children

The Panel received a report which focused on the findings arising from the Ofsted/Care Quality Commission inspection of services for Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire with specific reference to the contribution of the Health Services to the children's health and wellbeing. The report also set out the actions proposed to address the issues which had arisen from the inspection.

The meeting noted that the inspection had been carried out between 20 February and 2 March 2012.

The report was introduced by the Consultant in Public Health, NHS Bedfordshire who first drew Members' attention to Ofsted's judgement that health outcomes for Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire were poor and that outcomes to enable Looked After Children to be healthy were

inadequate. The health outcomes had declined over the 12 months proceeding December 2011 compared to East of England and England averages. In addition the inspection had highlighted a number of specific weaknesses including:

- Health agency awareness of their responsibilities towards Looked After Children
- Access to health information by Looked After Children
- No specific health service for care leavers or health after care service
- The content and quality of health files
- No permanent designated doctor or nurse for Looked After Children in place.

The Consultant in Public Health next drew Members' attention to Ofsted's conclusion that, in order to meet the health needs of Looked After Children, some issues should be addressed in the three to six month period following the inspection whilst others required longer term planning and service redesign. Further to this conclusion the report set out the areas of improvement identified by Ofsted and the action taken in response under a two stage programme; stage 1 covering the three to six month period following the inspection and stage 2 covering the longer term service redesign. The Consultant in Public Health worked through the actions already taken and updated the meeting on any further developments which had taken place since the report had been written, with especial reference the appointment of a Designated Doctor and Designated Nurses and the related challenges.

In response to a Member's request regarding the presentation of stage 1 of the programme as an action plan the Consultant in Public Health explained that an action plan was being developed which would address all the issues raised by the inspection. It had not been possible to provide a copy to the meeting because the action plan was not yet ready but it would be submitted to a future Panel meeting. The Interim Assistant Director, Children's Services Operations stated that the action plan would include all relevant dates so that Members could effectively monitor progress. The Head of Service, Safeguarding and Children in Care explained that the action plan would integrate the contributions by both health and social care. She added that there were 8-9 work streams and working groups were in the process of identifying the remedial actions required but the first draft should be available by the end of the week. The Head of Service assured the Panel that the draft action plan would be submitted to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny committees and Executive for consideration and approval. She undertook to clarify the timetable to be followed and update Members.

The Member also referred to the reference in the report to the development and distribution of an age appropriate health promotion information pack for Looked After Children and requested that the Panel have the opportunity to examine and comment on it. In response the Consultant in Public Health assured Members that the pack's content had received thorough consideration during its preparation. She undertook to circulate copies of the pack to Members.

The meeting gave full consideration to the means by which the health care needs of Looked After Children were being met, the role of the children themselves and the areas identified as requiring improvement. During discussion the Head of Service, Safeguarding and Children in Care stressed that the health needs of Looked After Children were currently being met on an individual basis but that the Ofsted inspection had revealed the need for improvement at the strategic level. She stated that actions to ensure such improvements were implemented were fully embedded in the forthcoming action plan.

A Member commented on the Panel's desire to see Looked After Children offered the same opportunities that any good parent would wish to offer their child. She then referred to a comment by the Consultant in Public Health regarding improvements leading to an adequate standard of service by three months and queried whether the quality of service could not be improved upon still further. In response the Consultant in Public Health concurred in full, explaining that the proposed action incorporated within the stage 2 service redesign reflected aspirations well beyond 'adequate'.

In response to a query regarding future Ofsted inspections the Interim Assistant Director, Children's Services Operations stated that a new inspection regime had been introduced that month and all future inspections would take place unannounced and last for at least one week. The next inspection would take place at some point next year.

In conclusion the Consultant in Public Health stressed that issues raised by the Ofsted inspection were strategic in nature and were not a reflection on the quality of health care service provided to Looked After Children on day to day basis.

NOTED

the findings of the Ofsted/Care Quality Commission inspection of services for Looked After Children and the action taken and proposed to address the health related issues that had arisen.

RESOLVED

- 1 that, when ready, the action plan drawn up to address the issues raised by the Ofsted/Quality Care Commission inspection be submitted to the Corporate Parenting Panel for consideration;**
- 2 that the next six monthly health report on Looked After Children made to the Corporate Parenting Panel include a full update on the progress made in addressing issues raised by the inspection.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 11.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.30 p.m.)