

Meeting: Corporate Parenting Panel
Date: 22 April 2013
Subject: Looked After Children Placement Strategy
Report of: Sue Tyler, Acting Assistant Director Children's Services Operations
Summary: The report outlines Central Bedfordshire Council's refreshed Placement Strategy in relation to current provision and future need for placements for looked after children.

Contact Officer: Fiona Mackirdy, Head of Adoption and Fostering
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Central Bedfordshire Council's Strategic Plan 2012-16 Priority 3 – Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable

The Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014 Priority 2 – Protecting children and keeping them safe.

Providing placements is a key statutory responsibility to Looked After Children.

Financial:

1. The Council currently allocates a total annual budget of approximately £5.9 million to provide a range of placements for looked after children. There are no new financial considerations arising from the Placement Strategy.

Legal:

2. Regulations issued under The Children Act 1989 requires a council to take strategic action in respect of those children it looks after. This includes a requirement to take steps, as far as reasonably practicable, that secures accommodation for looked after children within the authority's area and which meets the needs of those children. Statutory Guidance issued in 2010 gave further direction to Councils on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children and outlined how councils should carry out their duty under The Children Act which came into force in April 2011.
3. The Placement Strategy is Central Bedfordshire Council Children's Services response to the duty.

Risk Management:

4. Regulatory Risk: Failure to report to Elected Members would risk adverse inspection judgements from Ofsted in respect of effective Corporate Parenting.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

5. Not Applicable.

Equalities/Human Rights:

6. Services provided to Looked after Children affects all sectors of communities. Looked after children are particularly vulnerable in comparison with non-looked after peers.

Community Safety:

7. Not Applicable.

Sustainability:

8. Not Applicable.

RECOMMENDATION:

that the Corporate Parenting Panel comment on the content of the refreshed Placement Strategy.

Background

9. A Placement Strategy was written in 2011 and presented to this Panel on 5 March 2012.
10. Following the Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children in February 2012 it was part of the action plan to refresh the Placement Strategy to ensure there were robust plans to address the Ofsted requirement in respect of accommodation for 16-18 year olds.
11. On 5 March 2012 the Corporate Parenting Panel asked for some alignment of dates and data in the Placement Strategy, which has been addressed in this refreshed version.

Summary

12. The updated Strategy is attached for the Panel's discussion.

Conclusion and Next Steps

13. An Action Plan is included in the report, and progress towards achieving the actions will be kept under review by Children's Services and presented to this Panel.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Looked After Children Placement Strategy

Background Papers:

None

Location of papers:

N/A