

Meeting: Corporate Parenting Panel
Date: 22 April 2013
Subject: Foster Carers' Charter & Care Leavers' Charter
Report of: Sue Tyler, Acting Assistant Director Children's Services Operations
Summary: The report outlines Charters to be adopted by Central Bedfordshire Council in respect to the support and commitment to foster carers providing placements to children in the care of Central Bedfordshire Council, and information about the development of the Care Leavers' Charter.

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

Financial:

1. There are no new financial considerations arising from either of these Charters.

Legal:

2. There is no legal duty to have a Foster Carers' Charter or a Care Leavers' Charter however it is considered good practice, and Ofsted consider whether a council has adopted these when inspecting services for looked after children.

Risk Management:

3. Not applicable.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

4. Not applicable.

Equalities/Human Rights:

5. Services provided to Looked after Children, including fostering affects all sectors of communities.

Community Safety:

6. Not Applicable.

Sustainability:

7. Not Applicable.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Corporate Parenting Panel comment on both Charters in order that they can be adopted by Central Bedfordshire Council.

Background

8. The Government launched the Foster Carers' Charter in March 2011 and the Care Leavers' Charter in October 2012. The Charters were jointly produced by Government, fostering organisations, charities and children and young people. They are part of the Government's wider programme of reform to improve the care system.
9. Locally, during 2011 and 2012 there was work progressed with the Foster Carers' Forum and with the local Foster Care Association to add local commitments to the Charter.
10. Following their request the DCS has written to the Department of Education to ask if the young people of Central Bedfordshire can make the Care Leavers' Charter bespoke to Central Bedfordshire. A response is still awaited.
11. As the fostering service is a shared service with Bedford Borough Council, a similar version of the Charter has been developed for Bedford Borough Council. This has been presented to that Council's Corporate Parenting Panel.

Summary

12. The two Charters are attached for the Panel's discussion.

Conclusion and Next Steps

13. The Department for Education will be informed that the Charters have been adopted. Copies of the charters will be published on the Council website and distributed to foster carers and care leavers. Monitoring of delivery against the Charters will be done through the Foster Carers' Forum which is a quarterly meeting of foster carer representatives and senior officers in Children's operational services and the Children in Care Council.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Central Bedfordshire Foster Carers' Charter

Appendix B – Department for Education Charter for Care Leavers.

Background Papers:

None

Location of papers:

N/A