

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 9 May 2016

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

Cllrs Mrs C Hegley (Chairman)
Mrs A Barker
Mrs S A Goodchild
Mrs T Stock
M A G Versallion

Officers (voting)

Mr T Keaveney, Assistant Director Housing Services

Carers (non-voting)

Mr P Albon

Apologies for Absence: Cllr A L Dodwell, Vice-Chairman
Mrs S Harrison, Director of Children's Services
Mrs J Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing
Mr D Thorne, Foster Carer Representative

Members in Attendance: Cllr P Hollick

Officers in Attendance:	Mr L Butler	– Social Worker
	Ms D Cini	– Social Worker, Fostering Support
	Ms A Craig	– Practice Manager, Fostering
	Mr G Jones	– Assistant Director Children's Services Operations
	Ms S Malivore	– Social Worker
	Mr L Manning	– Committee Services Office
	Mrs K Oellermann	– Assistant Director Commissioning & Partnerships
	Miss N Phillips	– Practice Manager Adoption
	Ms M Short	– Participation Officer, Professional Standards
	Mr E Wong	– Head of Corporate Parenting

Others in Attendance: Ambassadors – for Children in Care Council
Care Leaver
Foster Carer and
Foster Child

CPP/15/39. **Members' Interests**

Councillor Mrs A Barker declared an interest as a member of the Council's Adoption Panel.

CPP/15/40. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 14 March 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CPP/15/41. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The Chairman welcomed the Participation Officer, Professional Standards and the Ambassadors for the Children in Care Council (CiCC) to the meeting. She also welcomed Ruth Coals, the Council's newly appointed Principal Social Worker and Head of Professional Standards, to her first Panel meeting.

The Chairman reminded the meeting of the efforts being made to encourage other members of the Council to attend the Panel and, in this context, she welcomed Councillor Hollick to the meeting.

The Chairman referred to an article in a recent Members' Information Bulletin (Issue 349 refers) which explained that new group or individual activities or experiences were being sought for Looked After Children and young people to take part in during the school holidays or as part of their career development including training and apprenticeships. In view of the importance of the article's content she felt that it should be repeated. The Chairman suggested that a 'taster day' be held to enable Looked After Children to shadow those in careers that were of interest to the children. She asked that anyone able to assist should contact the Council.

The Chairman advised that she had asked the Committee Services Officer to ensure that all members of the Council received an electronic alert notifying them of when Corporate Parenting Panel agendas and minutes were published.

The Chairman referred to the minutes of the previous meeting (minute CPP/15/33 refers) and stated that the possibility of placing the notes for the Member briefing on corporate parenting on the Council's intranet was still being examined.

The Chairman referred to the minutes of the previous meeting (minute CPP/15/34 refers) and the feasibility of starting the Panel's meetings at 4.00 p.m. She stated that she had met with the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations and the Participation Officer, Professional Standards to discuss this issue but certain issues remained unresolved.

The Chairman queried whether an exempt section should be included on the agenda to enable Looked After Children and young people to talk freely about their experiences and concerns and for video clips to be shown. The CiCC Ambassadors indicated their support for this whilst the Committee Services Officer stated that, as long as he was made aware of the requirement whilst preparing the agenda, he would include an exempt section.

A wide ranging discussion then followed on apprenticeship and employment opportunities for young people and the efforts being undertaken by both Central Bedfordshire and others to ensure that demand for assistance was met. The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations suggested that the issues raised be considered in a spotlight report.

CPP/15/42. Adoption Service Statement of Purpose 2016/17

The Panel considered a report on the Adoption Service draft Statement of Purpose for 2016/17. The draft Statement, a copy of which was attached at Appendix A to the report, had been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Authority Adoption Service (England) Regulations 2003 and Standard 18 of the National Minimum Standards for Adoption 2011.

The Practice Manager Adoption introduced the report and highlighted the changes which had been incorporated into the draft Statement.

The Chairman sought an update regarding the forthcoming regional adoption agencies. In response, and to set the matter in context, the Assistant Director Children's Service Operations first reminded Members that the government had introduced legislation which required local authorities to participate in regional adoption agencies. The government felt that local adoption services were too small and fragmented and that regional agencies could offer greater expertise and enable a faster and easier matching of adopters and children.

The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations and Head of Corporate Parenting then briefed the Panel on the current situation regarding Central Bedfordshire Council's proposed membership of the regional adoption agency known as the Eastern Region Consortium (ERC) which operated under the lead of Coram, the UK children's charity. The meeting noted that the Consortium's 12 month project plan was expected to be made available soon and the Department for Education would decide on its suitability by the end of May 2016. The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations warned Members of the possible substantial increase in funding which could be required to provide an adoption service under the ERC, although Members noted that the financial arrangements had yet to be fully costed. The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations stressed that should the Consortium's service costs prove unsustainable then consideration would be given to membership of an alternative consortium.

Extensive discussion followed during which the Assistant Director Children's Services responded to Members' queries. He emphasised that the Council, like other relevant local authorities, had no direct input into the project management of the proposed regional adoption agencies; the relationship was

between the DfE and the voluntary adoption agencies like Corum who would take the lead in any consortium.

The Assistant Director Children's Services Operations stated that Corum was fully aware of the Council's concerns regarding the proposals and representatives from that body were scheduled to meet him to provide reassurance. He undertook to brief the Panel regularly on developments in this area.

RESOLVED

- 1 that the Adoption Service draft Statement of Purpose 2016/17 be approved and adopted;**
- 2 that reports on the outcome of attempts to establish a regional adoption agency be submitted to the Panel for consideration on a regular basis.**

CPP/15/43. Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2016/17

The Panel considered a report on the Fostering Service draft Statement of Purpose for 2016/17. The meeting was aware that the draft Statement, a copy of which was attached at Appendix A to the report, had been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of fostering services, the National Minimum Standards (NMS) for the provision of fostering services and the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 which governed the work of fostering services throughout England.

The Practice Manager, Fostering introduced the report and drew the Panel's attention to the changes incorporated into the draft Statement since its previous version. She mentioned, in particular, the addition of a new section on foster carers and amendments to reflect the changes in the management and staffing structure of the Fostering Team.

RESOLVED

that the Fostering Service draft Statement of Purpose 2016/17 be approved and adopted.

CPP/15/44. Securing Education, Employment and Training for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

The Panel had before it a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided a summary of the work managed by the Central Bedfordshire Youth Support Service (YSS) for Looked After Children and care leavers and the help it provided in raising the aspirations of Looked After Children and care leavers as they moved towards their chosen careers.

In connection with the above the Youth Service Commissioning Manager introduced a young person to the meeting. The young person, who had arrived in the UK as an unaccompanied asylum seeker, described his educational attainments, work experience and aspirations. Following discussion the Panel thanked the young person for attending. The latter then left the meeting to attend college.

The Panel turned to consider the report before it. The report included:

- The responsibilities the YSS had to Looked After Children and care leavers
- The service the YSS provided to Looked After Children and care leavers
- How the YSS worked together with the Virtual School and Corporate Parenting Service to achieve positive outcomes
- The current performance of the YSS, including the progress for key groups and projects
- Plans for delivering YSS services and support in 2016/17.

The Youth Service Commissioning Manager introduced the report and discussion followed on a number of topics including the rapid growth in the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers, the problems in obtaining support to continue education until the age of 25 and the need to tailor the support to the individual, ensuring choices for disabled young people and the availability and standard of advice and guidance within schools.

In conclusion the Chairman stated that, whilst there had been a great deal of improvement in the quality of service offered to Looked After Children and care leavers, more work remained to be done. She was aware, however, of the restrictions placed by staff numbers and workload capacity.

The Chairman thanked the Youth Service Commissioning Manager for bringing the young person to the meeting and she undertook to write to the latter thanking him for his attendance and for describing his educational and work achievements and aspirations.

With regard to educational aspirations in general she reminded the Panel that these were lower in Central Bedfordshire than in some other local authority areas and needed to be improved.

NOTED

the services for Looked After Children and care leavers outlined in the report, the progress made to date and the areas identified by the Youth Support Service and its partners for development in 2016/17.

RESOLVED

that the development of a new Council wide approach to promoting access to apprenticeships for Looked After Children and care leavers that are employed by the local authority be supported.

CPP/15/45. **Placement Stability for Looked After Children**

At this point the Panel welcomed a foster carer and her foster child, together with additional officers, to the meeting.

The Practice Manager, Fostering introduced the presentation entitled 'Placement Stability' which accompanied the spotlight session on this topic.

A copy of the presentation pack is attached at Appendix A to the minutes.

The following matters were considered:

- How Placement Stability is measured
- Findings of the recent Evaluation Study
- Summary of Action Plan
- What makes placement stable – children's and foster carers' stories
- Questions

A social worker informed the Panel that the foster carer who was present at the meeting with her foster child had applied to adopt the child and the application was scheduled to be heard by the Adoption Panel later in the week.

Arising from the background relating to the foster child present at the meeting full discussion took place on the type and level of intervention undertaken within vulnerable families, the threshold at which action was taken and the difficulties which existed in identifying the most appropriate time at which to do so.

The Chairman thanked the foster carer and social workers for their attendance at the meeting. She emphasised the value of the debate which had been generated in relation to intervention.

(Note:

- 1 Prior to the conclusion of this item Councillor M A G Versallion declared an interest because he had known the foster carer referred to above for approximately ten years and he was a non executive director of the Luton and Dunstable University Hospital.
- 2 Prior to the conclusion of this item Councillor Mrs A Barker declared an additional interest because, as a member of the Adoption Panel, she had seen the details of the adoption application by the foster carer referred to above. She did not refer to the application when speaking at the meeting).

NOTED

the spotlight session on placement stability.

CPP/15/46. **Work Programme**

Members considered a report which provided, as context, the final part of the Panel's work programme for the municipal year 2015/16. The report also set out the proposed work programme for the whole of the municipal year for 2016/17.

The meeting was aware that an additional item had been added to the work programme during the meeting (minute CPP/15/42 above refers). In addition the aware that the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations had suggested that a spotlight report be presented to the Panel on youth support and help for adolescents in gaining further education, apprenticeships or employment.

RESOLVED

that the proposed Corporate Parenting Panel work programme for the municipal year 2016/17, as attached at Appendix A of the report of the Committee Services Manager and Committee Services Officer, be approved subject to:

- 1 replacing the report titled 'Corporate Parenting Action Plan – Annual Review', and scheduled to be submitted to the Panel on 4 July 2016, with a report titled 'Corporate Parenting Annual Report';**
- 2 including a spotlight report on youth support and help for adolescents in gaining further education, apprenticeships or employment.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.26 p.m.)