

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 15, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford on Monday, 14 November 2016

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

Cllrs Mrs C Hegley (Chairman)
Mrs A L Dodwell (Vice-Chairman)
R D Berry (substituting for Mrs A Barker)
N B Costin
Mrs S A Goodchild
Mrs T Stock
M A G Versallion
B Wells

Officers (voting)

Mr T Keaveney, Assistant Director Housing Services

Carers (non-voting)

Mr D Thorne

Apologies for Absence: Cllr Mrs A Barker
Mrs J Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Officers in Attendance:	Ms K Baughan	– Social Worker, Court and Permanency
	Ms A Craig	– Practice Manager, Fostering
	Ms J Edwards	– Head of Service, Virtual School and Vulnerable Pupils
	Mr G Jones	– Assistant Director Children's Services Operations
	Mr L Manning	– Committee Services Officer
	Miss N Phillips	– Practice Manager, Adoption
	Mr N Stock	– Practice Manager, Court and Permanency

Others in Attendance:	Ambassador	– for Children in Care Council
	Dr S Chakrabarti	– Director Public Health
	Ms S Fitzpatrick	– Professional Lead, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Looked After Children Team

CPP/16/19. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

Present – Elected Members (voting)

Add 'R D Berry (substituting for Councillor N B Costin)' and 'B Wells' to the list of those Members present at the meeting.

CPP/16/20. **Members' Interests**

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

CPP/16/21. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The following announcements and communications were made:

- the Chairman referred to the problem experienced by some Members in accessing the exempt report at item 9 on the agenda
- the Chairman expressed her thanks to all those involved in the recent Children in Care Council awards evening and for the contribution made by both Members and officers
- at the request of the Chairman the Assistant Director Children's Services Operations outlined the circumstances relating to the recent death in Luton of a former Central Bedfordshire Council care leaver and stated that a learning review would be carried out by the Council. The Assistant Director undertook to fully brief the Chairman on the case.

CPP/16/22. **Emotional Wellbeing of Children and Young People**

The Panel received a comprehensive presentation on promoting the emotional wellbeing and mental health of Looked After Children and young people and the role of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs). Copies of the questionnaires were circulated at the meeting for Members' information.

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

Points and comments included:

- consideration was being given to increasing staffing levels in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to deal with demand where necessary

- the clear gender differences in the SDQ scores, with boys scoring higher (poorer). These were due to the different coping mechanisms employed by boys and girls when responding to difficult emotional issues
- the reasons for the below national average figures for anxiety and depression amongst children and young people in Central Bedfordshire had not been identified. However, it was suggested that, at a national level, factors such as social media, pressure to succeed and lower levels of resilience coupled with greater recognition of the problem were contributory factors.

NOTED

the comprehensive presentation on the emotional wellbeing of Looked After Children and young people.

CPP/16/23. **Fostering Agency Report - Quarter 2 (1 July - 30 September 2016)**

The Panel considered the report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing which outlined activity in the Fostering Service during Quarter 2 (1 July to 30 June 2016).

Points and comments included:

- although officers assisted foster carers to complete the required mandatory training some carers experienced difficulties in doing so due to work commitments and time constraints. The consequences included a potential drop in tier and associated fee level
- the recruitment of foster carers was now targeted towards securing carers for older children, unaccompanied asylum seekers and those children with complex needs. The Council had been successful in recruiting carers willing to foster sibling groups and further developments in this area were expected
- successful efforts had been made to recruit younger foster carers to ensure that older carers who retired were replaced.

NOTED

the content of the Quarter 2 report on the Fostering Service for the period July to September 2016.

CPP/16/24. **Six Monthly Report in Respect of the Adoption Service - 1 April to 30 September 2016**

The Panel considered the report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing which outlined activity in the Adoption Service over the six month period from 1 April to 30 September 2016.

Points and comments included:

- despite the Government's support for increased adoption levels the number of adoptions was decreasing as a result of the high thresholds set by the family courts, the range of alternative permanency options and an insufficient number of younger children and those regarded as the most suitable by prospective adopters
- the family courts' interpretation of the law had impacted on the viability of some adoption agencies
- the increasing number of unaccompanied asylum seekers had not contributed to the number of children of adoptable age in England to any extent as the predominant group were older teenagers and some were reunited with their families on reaching the UK.

NOTED

the content of the six monthly report on the Adoption Service for the period April to September 2016.

CPP/16/25. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

RESOLVED

that in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that consideration of the item is likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

CPP/16/26. **Interim Report - Virtual School for Looked After Children**

The Panel considered a report from the Director of Children's Services which explained the role of the Central Bedfordshire Virtual School and provided the unvalidated educational outcomes at Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 for Looked After Children in the academic year 2015/16. The report also identified the measures taken by the Virtual School in the current academic year 2016/17, in partnership with other agencies, to raise the achievement and progress of all Looked After Children.

Points and comments included:

- appreciation of the work undertaken by the officers and the detailed data provided in the report

NOTED

the progress made to date in improving outcomes for Looked After Children and young people in Central Bedfordshire during the academic year 2016/17.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.56 p.m.)