

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 14, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford on Monday, 6 March 2017

### PRESENT

#### Elected Members (voting)

Cllrs Mrs C Hegley (Chairman)  
Mrs A L Dodwell (Vice-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 N B Costin  
Cllr B Wells  
Mrs S Harrison, Director of Children's Services  
Mrs J Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Officers in Attendance:	Mr R Bharkhada	– Interim Head of Corporate Parenting Service
	Ms R Coals	– Principal Social Worker and Head of Professional Standards
	Ms A Craig	– Practice Manager, Fostering
	Mrs J Dickinson	– Assistant Director Leisure, Libraries and Countryside
	Ms S Griffin	– Committee Services Officer
	Mr G Jones	– Assistant Director Children's Services Operations
	Mr T Keaveney	– Assistant Director Housing Services
	Mr L Manning	– Committee Services Officer
	Miss N Phillips	– Practice Manager Adoption
	Ms M Short	– Participation Officer, Professional Standards
Others in Attendance:	Ambassadors	– For Children in Care Council
	Ms T McDonald	– Designated Nurse for Looked After Children (NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group)

CPP/11/27 **Minutes**

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

CPP/11/28 **Members' Interests**

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

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

CPP/11/29 **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The following announcements and communications were made:

1. The Chairman welcomed Raj Bharkhada, Interim Head of Corporate Parenting Service to the meeting.
2. The Panel were advised that Edward Wong, Head of Corporate Parenting Service and Helen Redding, Assistant Director, School Improvements had left the Authority. Mr Wong was now employed by Southwark Council as the Assistant Director Corporate Parenting. The Panel expressed its thanks for the work they had undertaken on behalf of the Corporate Parenting Panel during their employment at Central Bedfordshire Council.
3. The Chairman welcomed Sharon Griffin, Committee Services Officer to the meeting who would be supporting future meetings of the Panel. Thanks were given to Leslie Manning, Committee Services Officer for the support he had provided to the Panel.
4. The Chairman expressed her thanks to all those involved in the interview process for the Peer Review. The initial response was very positive. At the request of the Chairman, an update on the feedback from the Peer Review and a spotlight session on care leavers and housing options would be given at the May meeting of the Panel.
5. The Chairman invited the CiCC Ambassadors to visit Priory View, an independent living development for older people in Dunstable, so that they could give their views on what Central Bedfordshire Council was doing for older people in terms of housing.
6. At the request of the Chairman, the Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help updated Members on the internal reorganisation of Children's Services as part of the Transformation Plan: the aim being to reduce the costs of senior management. An update on the Transformation process would be given at a future meeting of the Panel.

7. The Committee Services Officer undertook to provide a link to the job advertisement for the vacant post of the Assistant Director Transformation.
8. The Chairman advised the order of business for the meeting would be varied from the schedule shown on the agenda in order that the Children in Care Council's (CiCC) presentation at item 11 could be considered in conjunction with the CiCC Annual Report at item 5.

CPP/11/30 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**RESOLVED**

**that in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.**

CPP/11/31 **Children in Care Council and Participation 2016 - 2017**

The Panel considered the Children in Care Council's Annual Report for the period of 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 in conjunction with the exempt presentation.

Points and comments on the Report included:

1. Work was ongoing to raise the profile of the CiCC. Challenges included the number of young people attending CiCC events continued to fluctuate, changes in the service that could cause challenges for the young people and their involvement/commitment to the CiCC. The times of the CiCC meetings often meant that only certain young people could attend.
2. The difficulty of finding members from the younger age range had been resolved with a core group of CiCC members currently in place. The younger group included young people as young as 8 but the group was mostly 8-15 year olds.
3. Emotional wellbeing and building resilience was very important. Consultations on Personal Education Plans, Pupil Premium and the review of Looked After Children's Review documents were welcomed.
4. The CiCC would be delivering training to the 300 participants of the Summer institute, which this year would include those who would be working with CBC to complete training.
5. The Chairman advised that the initiative to provide young people with opportunities to find out more about chosen careers or experience new activities had been very well supported by members of the Panel. An Aspirations Wish List had been generated from the young people and their career aspirations.

6. In recognition of the work undertaken, a certificate had been designed for LAC Champions with the aim of certificates being awarded to Champions at future meetings of the Panel. The first certificate would be awarded to Councillor Chatterley for arranging a visit to Luton Town Football Club. Members of the Panel were asked to publicise the LAC Champion initiative and to bring forward ideas for opportunities not on the list which Members had access to and could facilitate.

Points and comments on the presentation included:

1. The membership of the CiCC currently consisted of 30 members with an age range of 8-16 years old. Succession planning was in place to ensure that the work undertaken so far by the CiCC would not be lost.
2. The approach to the use of a Life Story Book was currently inconsistent in terms of some young people being offered a Life Story Book, others not being offered this visual aid and also partial use throughout the journey of the young person. An area of work was being undertaken by the CiCC to ensure every young person is given the option of completing a Life Story Book and that this is a continuous process throughout their journey.
3. A CiCC Ambassador indicated that she would be willing to share her Life Story Book at a future meeting of the Panel.
4. The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help undertook to provide a template Life Story Book for members of the panel to examine.
5. Many children in care and care leavers are not sure what benefits they are entitled to such as support with driving and university fees. Members of the CiCC have discussed the possibility of producing a booklet for young people and professionals which sets out what young people in care are entitled to at what age, including information about opportunities such as Further Education and employment.
6. With regard to increasing engagement and participation of children with disabilities and young people who are seeking asylum, there is now a link with Maythorn, a residential unit for disabled children and young people which enables ways of engagement to be explored and the venues for CiCC meetings are rotated and transport provided to facilitate attendance. Two members of the CiCC are also currently taking forward the equality assurance role with the commissioning team.

The Chairman thanked the CiCC Ambassadors for the work they had undertaken.

## **NOTED**

**the Children in Care Council's Annual Report 01 April to 31 March 2017  
and the accompanying exempt presentation.**

**(Note:**

- 1. Minute CPP/17/37 below also refers**
- 2. At the conclusion of this item the Panel moved into public session)**

CPP/11/32 **LAC Health Report - Six Monthly Update**

The Panel considered the report of the NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group's Looked After Children Annual report for 2015/16 which outlined future developments and commitments from the Annual Report 2015/16.

Points and comments included:

1. A new Health Passport was being developed in conjunction with NHS England and the possibility of the use of a mobile app to access the passport. The health passport was a physical document which would be kept by the young person. A copy was also kept by the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) and the individual's GP.
2. The Central Bedfordshire CAMHS team was now located at Stephenson Court, Bedford.
3. The East of England protocol for Looked After Children and Care Leavers would be rolled out in early spring. An update on the protocol would be given as part of the annual LAC Health Report.
4. South Essex Partnership Trust (SEPT) was commissioned to provide a service for Looked After Children in Bedfordshire and East London NHS Foundation Trust currently provided all mental health services including CAHMS.
5. Challenges in meeting the statutory guidance for the completion of Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) included late referrals from social workers and young people not attending their appointments. Following some challenges in summer around the IHA process for asylum seekers, resilience had been placed within the team to add extra clinics if needed. There was also the ongoing issue of trying to ensure that Looked After Children placed out of county attended IHAs.
6. The results of an examination of the health of local children in care had shown that their physical health was a mirror image of the health of children in the general population. However, their emotional health was not.
7. All GPs attended training for Looked After Children as part of level 3 of their safeguarding training and each GP surgery had a safeguarding lead which provided the link between the surgery and the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children. Health visitors should be aware of LAC on their case loads as the safeguarding needs of LAC were identified under the

Universal Partnership Plus offer. Work was ongoing to establish a link between School Nurses and Designated Nurses.

8. Initial Health Assessments for Looked After Children service currently covered the age range of 0-19 years. The possibility of extending the current age range and improving the transition from children's services to adult services was being looked at as part of the SEND agenda.
9. If a young person is still in education they can contact the LAC team for support around issues such as mental health or a change in lifestyle.
10. A project was taking place to look at the commissioning of health services for care leavers which would include consultation with commissioners and care leavers about possible improvements to the current process.
11. The Panel requested that a sub-section on carer leavers health be added to the CCG annual report.

#### **NOTED**

#### **the NHS Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group's Looked After Children Annual Report for 2015/16.**

#### **CPP/11/33 Update of the Adoption Support Fund**

The Panel considered a report of the Director of Social Services which set out an update on the remit of the Adoption Support Fund and how the Council made use of the Fund.

Points and comments included:

1. From 1 April 2016 the Department for Education had extended the criteria for applications to include Intercountry Adoptions (once the placement had been made and the child was in England) and for Special Guardians who cared for children who were previously Looked After.
2. Following a budget review in October 2016, the Government had introduced the interim measure of a £5,000 'fair access limit'. This was followed by the announcement in January 2017 that the fair access limit of £5,000 per child for therapy accessed through the Adoption Support Fund (ASF), would continue into the next financial year (2017/18). There was also the requirement that local authorities share the costs of support above £5,000, through a match-funding approach.
3. Applications for £186k had been received and approved since the funding was made available in May 2015.
4. The Chairman queried the effectiveness of the Adoption Support Fund and its monitoring and expressed the need for additional information to be provided on this matter.

5. The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help referred to the expansion of the original range of the Fund beyond Adoption. Concern was expressed over the possibility that Central Government could withdraw its funding post 2020 leaving local authorities to finance the provision of therapeutic support and intervention not only to adopted children and their families but to an expanded range of clients.

## **RESOLVED**

**that a regular annual update on the Adoption Support Fund be submitted to the Panel.**

### CPP/11/34 **Fostering Agency Report - Quarter 3 (1 October - 31 December 2016)**

The Panel considered the report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing which outlined the activity in the Fostering Service from October to December 2016.

Points and comments included:

1. The results from the quarter were very positive with the Service on target to meet the recruitment of 10 new fostering households for this financial year. The number of placements with in-house foster carers was also increasing.
2. The number of Special Guardianship Orders in place had remained static at 140 at the end of this quarter.
3. Following the introduction of a training policy and mandatory training for certain areas, the number of carers attending training opportunities had increased. The consequences of not attending were a potential drop in tier and associated fee level.
4. A small number of foster carers adopt children they had initially fostered which was significant for the child in terms of the stability of not having to move placement.
5. A lot of work had taken place with schools to try to gain access to promote the fostering service. Information leaflets had been made available in schools and visits to schools to explain the fostering process could be arranged if requested.
6. A lot of head teachers and governors attend the cluster groups to discuss School Improvement which would be a captive audience in terms of engagement with schools.
7. A review of training for Foster Carers was taking place at the end of March during which attendance of training course would be looked at.
8. The requirement to form Regional Adoption Agencies had not been withdrawn by government. A further review of regional adoption agency plan was going to take place which include the rebase of the grounds of

procurement by the commissioning authority and the local authority. The DfE had been advised of concerns about the regional approach and officers were currently working on more practical and realistic options for the process. There were some collaborative arrangements nationally good practice already in place which could be built upon. One of the concerns was the risk of the regional adoption service being more expensive and less effective than the current service which was not acceptable.

9. Work was taking place to look at whether the current process of using an adoption panel to match children to a family would remain or whether this decision would be delegated to professionals. From a local authority perspective, how matches are agreed was yet to be defined.

#### **NOTED**

**the Fostering Agency Quarter report Quarter 3.**

#### CPP/11/35 **Work Programme**

Members considered the report of the Committee Services Manager and Committee Services Officer which set out the Panel's proposed work programme for the municipal year 2017/18.

#### **RESOLVED**

**that the Corporate Parenting Panel work programme for the municipal year 2017/18, as attached as Appendix A of the report of the Committee Services Manager and Committee Services Officer, be approved subject to the addition of the following items:**

- 8 May 2017
  - Peer Review and Action Plan
  - Transformation Update
- 3 July 2017 - Spotlight Report on Leaving Care Housing

#### CPP/11/36 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

#### **RESOLVED**

**that in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.**

#### CPP/11/37 **Children in Care Council Presentation**

The Panel received a presentation on the work that has been undertaken by the Children in Care Council during the year.

Note: Minute CPP/16/31 above also refers.

CPP/11/38 **Virtual School for Looked After Children - Interim Report**

Members were advised that the presenting officer was unable to attend the meeting. In the absence of the officer, the Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help responded to queries from Members of the Panel.

**RESOLVED**

**that further consideration of the Interim Report on the Virtual School for Looked After Children be deferred until the May meeting of the Panel.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.13 p.m.)