

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 15, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford on Monday, 8 May 2017

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

Cllrs Cllr Mrs C Hegley (Chairman)
R D Berry (substituting for Mrs A Barker)
D Bowater (substituting for Mrs A L Dodwell)
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)

Mrs T Rowlands
Mrs A Wallace

Apologies for Absence: Mr P Albon, Carer
Cllr Mrs A Barker
Cllr Mrs A L Dodwell, Vice-Chairman
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
	Mr G Jones	– Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help
	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

CPP/17/39. Election of Chairman

In the absence of the Chairman, and having received apologies for absence from the Vice-Chairman, it was

RESOLVED

that Councillor Mrs T Stock be elected Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel until such time as Councillor Mrs Hegley arrives at the meeting.

Councillor Mrs T Stock in the Chair

CPP/17/40. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

Minute CPP/11/32 (LAC Health Report – Six Month Update)

In the penultimate sentence of paragraph 7 delete ‘.re’ found between the words ‘case loads’ and ‘as the safeguarding’.

Note: At the conclusion of the above item at 10.14 a.m. Councillor Mrs C Hegley arrived at the meeting and took the Chair.

Councillor Mrs C Hegley in the Chair

CPP/17/41. **Members' Interests**

None notified.

CPP/17/42. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The following announcements and communications were made:

- The Children in Care Council (CiCC) Ambassadors had visited the Priory View development where they had been able to examine this example of housing provision for older people and meet with the sheltered tenants' action group.
- The CiCC Ambassadors had also attended a presentation for Councillor Chatterley. This had been held in recognition of Councillor Chatterley's work under the Looked After Children Champion initiative in arranging a visit for Looked After Children to Luton Town Football Club.
- The Chairman referred to the Panel's next meeting and to the scheduled report on Leaving Care Housing. She also stated that she would welcome an update on how the Aspirations Wish List was progressing. She was aware some offers had been made.

CPP/17/43. **Peer Review and Action Plan**

The Panel considered a presentation entitled 'Peer Review and Action Plan' which informed Members of the process and outcome of the Peer Review undertaken by the Eastern Region Partnership between 20-22 February. The presentation was introduced by the Interim Head of the Corporate Parenting Service.

The Panel noted that on the slide headed 'Action Plan – Work Streams' work stream number 6 should read 'Policy on missing UASC needs to be clearer'.

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

Points and comments included:

1. An expression of gratitude by the Interim Head of the Corporate Parenting Service to the Children in Care Council for its contribution to the Peer Review. He also thanked Members for the leadership role they had carried out.
2. Arising from the findings of the Review the Interim Head of the Corporate Parenting Service stressed that reflective supervision was taking place but that the extent to which it was held had not been accurately recorded.
3. The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help stated that the Peer Review had been treated by the Council as if it were a full Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) inspection.
4. The inspection team had stated that the quality of the Council's service was far better than the impression given by the Council itself. The Panel noted that Ofsted had previously made a similar comment.
5. The Peer Review was a planned (pre-notified) in-depth inspection which used Ofsted descriptors. The work undertaken by the Council in preparation for the Review would be of use when the expected future Ofsted inspection took place.
6. The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help referred to those areas where the Review had felt the Council could improve and he set out the action which had been taken in response. Although there was no final score awarded by the Review the Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help stated that, given there was no evidence of inadequacy, he believed the score would have been 'good'.
7. The Interim Head of Corporate Parenting responded to Members' queries regarding support for 'Out of County' care leavers. The meeting noted the background to this issue and the action which had already been taken. The Panel also noted the planned purchase of an app which would allow young people to access the full range of information that they required.

8. With regard to the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) the Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help advised that although the score had improved he acknowledged that issues remained in Central Bedfordshire regarding young peoples' mental health and general wellbeing.
9. Full debate took place on the issue of housing provision for care leavers and young people and the quantity, quality and appropriateness of that available. A Children in Care Ambassador briefed the Panel of her own experiences in this area. The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help, the Interim Head of Corporate Parenting and Assistant Director Housing Services responded to the points raised by Members.
10. In response to comments raised by the Chairman the Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help stated that Action Plan arising from the Review would be issued shortly. He added that much was already complete. With regard to employment and care leavers he suggested that a deep dive report and presentation be made to the Panel accompanied by care leavers and including the aspirations list. The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help stressed that accommodation for care leavers had been a matter of consideration for some time though he acknowledged that progress had been slow. Following further debate he stated that the report on housing scheduled for the Panel's July meeting would include an outline plan with actions and options.

NOTED

the presentation entitled 'Peer Review and Action Plan'.

RESOLVED

that a 'deep dive' item on care leaver employment to include a presentation, the Aspirations Wish List and the attendance of care leavers be made to a future meeting of the Panel.

CPP/17/44. Update on the Transformation Plan

The Panel considered a presentation entitled 'Transforming Children's Services' which updated Members on the progress made in implementing the Transformation Programme against the adopted timetable. The presentation was introduced by the Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help.

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

Points and comments included:

1. The numbers of Looked After Children, Child Protection Plans and Child in Need Plans had dropped following a significant increase in early help. This approach had reduced the number of children experiencing avoidable harm and family breakdowns. It was noted that there had

actually been a 9% reduction in the number of Looked After Children over a three year period rather than, as stated in the presentation, a 6% reduction over four years.

2. The Panel noted the major achievement the above figures represented and that they placed Central Bedfordshire within the top tier of local authorities in England. The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help stated that he believed the figures could be further improved and undertook to circulate an Executive report, which provided a useful background narrative on this topic, to Members.
3. The meeting noted the number, age and background of those children who had become Looked After between June 2015 and May 2016. The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help advised that four children had left care and one had entered the care system in April 2017. As a result of the dispersal of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC) when entering the country there were now fewer becoming Looked After in Central Bedfordshire.
4. Members raised a number of queries on aspects of the Transformation Programme including the need for its introduction, the likely outcome and impact on the quality of service provision and the recent decrease in the opportunity for Members to participate and comment on such proposals following the reorganisation of representative bodies. In response the Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help explained that the Transformation Programme was necessary because only limited change was possible under the current business delivery model. A more integrated service approach was required to meet the increasing challenges being faced both in local communities and in schools as these could not be managed under the current arrangements. Instead, teams of professionals with a range of skills were required and by December 2018, the target date at the end of the planned Transformation timetable, such teams would be in place in each locality able to undertake early intervention work.
5. Following Members' comments the Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help undertook to raise the progress of the establishment of a Members' Reference Group with the Director of Children's Services, provide the Panel with story board illustrating the Transformation journey, ensure that Members were fully briefed on the work that was being undertaken and bring the Transformation team to a future meeting of the Panel.

NOTED

the presentation entitled 'Transforming Children's Services'.

THE COMMITTEE ADJOURNED AT 12.05 P.M. AND RECONVENED AT 12.10 P.M.

CPP/17/45. Adoption Service Statement of Purpose 2017/18

The Panel considered a report on the draft Adoption Service Statement of Purpose for 2017/18.

Points and comments included:

- 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 including a revamped layout and greater detail.
- In response to a Member's queries the Practice Manager Adoption stated that, locally, the timescale for the adoption process had been reduced by 38 days and that, as a result, the Council lay within the top 25% of local authorities. She added that there had been no disrupted adoptions within the last twelve months, a situation which she attributed to the improved training of prospective adopters.

RESOLVED

that the draft Adoption Service Statement of Purpose 2017/18 be approved and adopted.

CPP/17/46. Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2017/18

The Panel considered a report on the draft Fostering Service Statement of Purpose for 2017/18.

Points and comments included:

- 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 revamped format adopted for the draft Statement and the inclusion of greater detail than in its previous versions.
- A Member commented on how easy it was to read and understand the draft Statement. She also suggested a minor amendment to the document.

RESOLVED

that, subject to amending the word 'quarter' to 'quarterly' in paragraph 14.3 of the draft Fostering Service draft Statement of Purpose 2017/18, the draft Statement be approved and adopted.

CPP/17/47. **Work Programme**

Members considered the report of the Committee services Officer which set out the Panel's proposed work programme for the municipal year 2017/18. The Panel was aware that it had already approved the addition of a 'deep dive' item on care leaver employment at a future meeting of the Panel (minute CPP/17/43 above refers).

The Assistant Director Housing Services referred to the scheduled report in July on Leaving Care Housing and, in view of the workload involved, requested that this item be deferred for consideration to the September meeting. The Interim Head of Corporate Parenting indicated his support for this action.

RESOLVED

that the Corporate Parenting Panel work programme, as attached at Appendix A of the report of the Committee Services Officer, be approved subject to:

- **deferring the scheduled 'spotlight' report on Leaving Care Housing to the September meeting of the Panel**
- **including a 'deep dive' item with a presentation and the attendance of care leavers on care leaver employment together with an update on the Aspirations Wish List at a future meeting of the Panel.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.08 a.m. and concluded at 12.24 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Dated.....