

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 14, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford. on Monday, 3 July 2017

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

Cllrs Mrs C Hegley (Chairman)
Mrs A L Dodwell (Vice-Chairman)
R D Berry (substituting for Mrs A Barker)
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 P Albon
Mrs T Rowlands
Mr D Thorne

Apologies for Absence: Cllr Mrs A Barker
Cllr N B Costin
Mrs S Harrison, Director of Children's Services
Mrs J Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Members in Attendance: Cllrs K Ferguson
F Firth
P Hollick
J G Jamieson

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	– Deputy Director Safeguarding and Early Help
	Ms J Howard	– Marketing, Recruitment and Training Officer
	Ms S Keenan	– Practice Manager Conference and Review Service
	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
Mr N Parks – Ofsted

CPP/17/1. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 May 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CPP/17/2. **Members' Interests**

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

CPP/17/3. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The following announcements and communications were made:

- On behalf of the Panel the Chairman welcomed the Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) inspector, Nigel Parks, to the meeting. The Chairman thanked everyone for accommodating the change in the start time of the Panel in order to enable Mr Parks to attend and to staff for meeting Ofsted's needs during the inspection. In response Mr Parks stated that everyone had been very helpful and he had been welcomed with openness and a lack of defensiveness.
- The Chairman drew Members' attention to the availability of on line training in relation to autism. In response a Member stated that she had been unable to access the training package and indicated that she required assistance to do so.
- The Chairman updated the Panel on the achievements and activities of some of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) Ambassadors including a contribution at the recent 'Cheering Volunteering' event and a triple distinction in training.
- The Chairman referred to the presentation to Councillor Chatterley at Priory View in Dunstable. This had been held in recognition of Councillor Chatterley's efforts in arranging a visit for Looked After Children to Luton Town Football Club. The Panel noted that the presentation certificate had been designed by a CiCC Ambassador. The presentation had been accompanied with a meeting with the chairman of the Priory View Resident's Association.

- At the Chairman's request the Panel received a brief update on the Aspirations Wish List.

CPP/17/4. **Independent Reviewing Officers' Annual Report April 2016 - March 2017**

The Panel considered a report of the Director of Children's Services on the Independent Reviewing Officers' Annual Report for 2016-17. Members noted that the Independent Reviewing Officers' (IRO's) Manager had a statutory responsibility for the production of an Annual Report for scrutiny by members of the Corporate Parenting Panel. To this end a copy of the Annual Report was attached at Appendix A to the Director of Children's Services report.

The Practice Manager Conference and Review Service introduced the Annual Report and highlighted matters of particular interest.

Points and comments included:

- The Practice Manager Conference and Review explained that a Looked After Child's participation in a review would take full account of the child's wishes and many took place outside school and after school hours. The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help Members stressed that the emphasis was on the child remaining in school to continue their education.
- With regard to comments by nearly three quarters of children and young people that they were not happy with the contact arrangements with family the Practice Manager stated that the information provided had been fed back to social workers to see if changes were both in the child's interest and could actually be implemented.
- The number of reviews had decreased slightly from 899 during 2015-16 to 872 in 2016-17. The Practice Manager stated that the number of Looked After Children had actually increased during 2016-17 and that the Council was required to meet a statutory requirement in relation to how often a child was reviewed.
- Ten young people had not participated in their reviews, seven of which were missing at that time. The Practice Manager explained that they had only been in Central Bedfordshire for a short period before going missing. She stated that everything was done to try and locate a missing child. The Interim Head of the Corporate Parenting Service stressed that a missing child was not forgotten and action was taken to track them.
- The Practice Manager referred to the forthcoming introduction of the MOMO (Mind of My Own) app for use by young people and how it provided young people with an instant and convenient way to express their views, wishes and feelings and provide social workers with a way

to record them. The Chairman asked that it be shown to the Panel and feedback provided from users.

- The CiCC Ambassadors commented favourably on the participation by IROs in activity days and how spending time with them in an informal and relaxed setting was beneficial to their relationship.

NOTED

the activity of the Conference and Review Service in relation to the reviews of Looked After Children during 2016-17 as set out within the Independent Reviewing Officers' Annual Report;

RESOLVED

that a presentation/demonstration of the new MOMO app take place at the Panel's meeting on 4 September 2017.

CPP/17/5. **Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2017/18**

The Panel considered a report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing which set out the fostering recruitment target for 2017/18 including an overview of key marketing initiatives and targeted campaigns.

A copy of the Strategy was attached at Appendix A to the report.

Points and comments included:

- The suggested use of Instagram and Snapchat as recruitment tools. The Marketing, Recruitment and Training Officer stated that discussions were to be held on the possible use of Instagram. Advertising on roundabouts was also suggested but the Practice Manager Fostering, whilst willing to take such suggestions on board, commented on the high cost of doing so.
- A Member reminded the Panel of an event held at Millbrook Parish Hall in 2015 when discussions had taken place involving Members, officers and some young people who were on the verge of living on their own on what was involved. He asked that a similar event be arranged. The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help welcomed the suggestion and asked the Participation Officer Professional Standards to make arrangements. A Children in Care Council (CiCC) Ambassador referred to her highly positive experience of living in a supported lodging scheme. Discussion took place on using this experience to help form future policy.
- A Member referred to 2013 when the percentage of Looked After Children placed with in-house foster carers was of the order of 41-42% and compared this with the current figure of 65% (as at 31 March 2017). He commented on the range of benefits that arose from this and

expressed his congratulations to the Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help for this achievement. In response the Assistant Director referred to the range of benefits which arose from in-house placements whilst acknowledging the competition posed by the Independent Fostering Agencies.

RESOLVED

that the Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2017/18, as set out at Appendix A to the report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing, be approved.

CPP/17/6. Investigating Concerns and Complaints against Foster Carers

The Panel considered a report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing which set out the new procedure for investigating concerns and complaints against foster carers.

A copy of the new procedure was attached at Appendix A to the report.

Points and comments included:

- The Practice Manager Fostering stated that the draft procedure had been discussed with foster carers and no concerns had been raised. The procedure would be disseminated through the next fostering newsletter.
- The Practice Manager Fostering stressed that the aim of the procedure was to provide a clear process for carers.

NOTED

the new procedure entitled 'Investigating Concerns and Complaints against Foster Carers' attached at Appendix A to the report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing.

CPP/17/7. Agency Report Quarter 4 - Fostering 1 January - 31 March 2017

The Panel considered a report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing which set out the Fostering Agency Report for Quarter 4 covering the period 1 January – 31 March 2017.

The Practice Manager Fostering informed the Panel that that part of the report had been omitted but a replacement copy of the report, which included the missing text, would be circulated after the meeting (Note: an extract from the replacement report which sets out the missing text in italics is attached at Appendix A to these minutes).

Points and comments included:

- A Member queried whether discussions took place with those Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) carers who transferred to Central Bedfordshire Council in order that their experiences in the two sectors could be compared. The meeting noted that discussions were held with potential transferees to ensure that they would be no worse off. The Council did learn from their experiences whilst providing them with support, training, stability and continuity.
- In response to a query the Practice Manager Fostering stated that exit interviews no longer took place due to resource issues although it was hoped that they could be reintroduced.
- The Practice Manager Fostering stated that all carers attended core training, had a personal development plan and a strengths and vulnerabilities profile which was taken account of when matching them with a child.
- The Practice Manager Fostering explained that some carers experienced difficulties in carrying out the training so 1-2-1 assistance was provided in such cases. The Marketing, Recruitment and Training Officer added that consideration was being given to developing DVDs, books and other media as an alternative to the existing pc/web based learning materials.
- The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help explained the circumstances leading to Special Guardianship Orders. He stated that the child or children involved were not formally in care, being cared for by a family member such as a grandparent, but the Council still had some responsibility for them.

NOTED

the Fostering Agency Quarter 4 Performance Report for 1 January – 31 March 2017.

CPP/17/8. Corporate Parenting Service - Fostering Team Annual Report 2016/17

The Panel considered a report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing on the 2016/17 Annual Report for the Fostering Agency. A copy of the Annual Report was attached at Appendix A to the Executive member's report and a copy of the Annual report of the Chair of the Fostering and Permanence Panel was attached at Appendix B.

The Practice Manager Fostering advised that, in the third sentence of paragraph 4.1.2, the number of Special Guardianship Order (SGO) families which had contacted the Fostering Service for specific support during this period should be 26 and not 27 as stated.

Points and comments included:

- The Chairman requested that the Practice Manager Fostering pass on the Panel's thanks to staff for their efforts.
- A Member suggested that particular issues be highlighted for consideration by Members in future rather than the report being submitted for noting.
- The Panel was advised that in-house fostering placements were spread amongst foster carers across Central Bedfordshire.
- The Vice-Chairman suggested that foster carer material could be made available at Members' surgeries.
- With regard to the possibility of undertaking further action if a complaint was not upheld, the Practice Manager Fostering stated that the outcome would be discussed with the complainant so that he or she was fully aware how the decision to not uphold a complaint had been reached. The Practice Manager Conference and Review Service added that discussions would also take place amongst the relevant staff to understand and clarify any issues raised.
- The Chairman asked that the Panel's thanks be passed on to the staff, foster carers and the Chair and members of the Fostering and Permanence Panel.
- The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help advised the meeting that information on the forthcoming Foster Carer Celebration would be circulated shortly.

NOTED

the Annual Report of the Fostering Agency for the period 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017.

CPP/17/9. Adoption Recruitment Strategy 2017/18

The Panel considered a report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing which outlined the adoption recruitment target for 2017/18, including an overview of key marketing initiatives and targeted campaigns.

A copy of the Adoption Recruitment Strategy was attached at Appendix A to the report.

The Marketing, Recruitment and Training Officer introduced the report.

The meeting noted that the strategy was similar in approach to that approved by the Panel for foster carers (minute CPP/17/5 above refers).

RESOLVED

that the Adoption Recruitment Strategy 2017/18, as set out in Appendix A to the report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing, be approved.

CPP/17/10. Adoption Agency Annual Report 2016/17

The Panel considered a report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing on the Adoption Agency's Annual Report for 2016/17.

A copy of the Annual Report was attached at Appendix A to the Executive Member's report and a copy of the Overview Report of the Chair of the Joint Adoption Panel for 2016/17 was attached at Appendix B.

The meeting noted that the Annual Report described the activities of the Council's Adoption Agency during the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017, including achievements and the remit and focus of the Agency's work. The report also identified recommendations for the development of the service.

Points and comments included:

- The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help referred to the mixed progress in the formation of a regional adoption agency. He reported that, following discussions it had been decided to reset the Central East Partnership, of which Central Bedfordshire Council was a member, so that Central Bedfordshire became the lead under the Director of Children's Services. The Assistant Director, mindful of the previous concerns expressed by the Panel, assured the meeting that the regional adoption agency would provide an improved service.
- A Member expressed his congratulations over the Council's performance in securing a reduction in the time taken in fully implementing the adoption process. On behalf of the Panel the Chairman expressed her thanks to those involved including the officers in the adoption team and the Chair and others involved in the Joint Adoption Panel.
- The Chairman queried if it would be possible for the Council to further reduce the length of the care proceedings but the Practice Manager Adoption advised that factors, such as court time availability, were beyond the Council's control.
- The Panel noted that Councillor Mrs Barker, a member of the Joint Adoption Panel, wished to step down from that position and a replacement was therefore required. In addition observers were needed to attend the Joint Adoption Panel. Members were encouraged to consider taking up one of these roles.

NOTED

the Adoption Agency Annual Report for 2016/17.

CPP/17/11. **Work Programme**

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

The Panel was aware that it had already agreed to a presentation/demonstration of the new MOMO (Mind of My Own) app at the meeting on 4 September 2017 (minute CPP/17/4 above refers).

With regard to the Panel's meeting on 4 September 2017 Members noted that the proposed item on the Chairman of the Adoption Panel's annual report should be deleted as the report had already been included with the Adoption Agency's annual report considered at the last meeting.

RESOLVED

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

- **deleting the proposed item on the Chairman of the Adoption Panel's annual report scheduled to be considered on 4 September 2017;**
- **adding a Children in Care Council progress report item for consideration at the Panel's meeting on 4 September 2017.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 2.00 p.m. and concluded at 4.40 p.m.)