

## CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 13 November 2017

### **PRESENT**

#### **Elected Members (voting)**

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

#### **Carers (non-voting)**

Mr P Albon

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

Officers in Attendance:	Ms R Coals	Principal Social Worker and Head of Professional Standards
	Mr A Coman	Head of Service
	Ms A Craig	Practice Manager, Fostering
	Mrs J Edwards	Head of Virtual School
	Ms S Griffin	Committee Services Officer
	Mr G Jones	Deputy Director Safeguarding and Early Help
	Mr L Manning	Committee Services Officer
	Miss N Phillips	Practice Manager Adoption

#### CPP/17/20. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 4 September 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### CPP/17/21. **Members' Interests**

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

**CPP/17/22. Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The following announcements and communications were made:

The Chairman expressed her thanks to all those involved in the Celebration of Fostering event which had taken place to highlight the work and achievements of our foster carers and was very well attended.

The Chairman advised that there is a vacancy on the Adoption Panel due to Councillor Barker standing down and sought assistance in filling this position.

Members were advised that due to various reasons the date of the Children In Care Awards had been moved several times. The Awards were now taking place on the 1 December and an appeal would be launched asking Members to contribute to the event.

The Chairman welcomed Alex Coman to the meeting who, following a rigorous interview process, had been appointed as Head of Service, Family Support Service.

At the request of the Chairman, the Deputy Director Safeguarding and Early Help provided an update on the following matters:

- A visit to Central Bedfordshire Council offices had been requested by Oxfordshire County Council, Northamptonshire County Council and the Deputy Director, Social Care Policy Ofsted to examine the work being undertaken by Children's Services including the transformation agenda.
- Central Bedfordshire Council had been nominated for the following awards:
  - Best social work employer and Adult Social Worker of the Year - the Social Worker of the Year Awards
  - Team of the Year, Kingfisher Residential Home - the Community Care awards.
  - Children's Services – the Local Government Chronicle

Drop in sessions will be arranged for Members to give them the opportunity to meet teams such as Fostering and Adoption. A dedicated suite of rooms was also now available at Priory House for families to visit. The rooms replaced the facilities at Stephenson Court.

Work had been undertaken to investigate the move by some local authorities to exempt care leavers from council tax charges.

**CPP/17/23. Agency Report Quarter 2 Fostering 1 July - 30 September 2017**

The Panel considered the report outlining the activity in the Fostering Agency during Quarter 2.

Points and comments included:

1. In September, the Service held its Celebration of Fostering event which was attended by over 130 carers and children. Long service awards were presented to 15 foster carers and their families who had clocked up 120 years' service between them. The feedback received from the event had been very positive.
2. As of the 30 September 2017 the Fostering Agency had a total of 110 fostering households (compared to 109 at the end of the previous quarter).
3. As of the 30 September there were 143 Special Guardianship Orders in place which was a small increase compared to 139 at the end of the last quarter. The reason for this increase could be due to seasonal issues such as a larger cohort of early births.
4. The Fostering Service introduced a new 'PACE' (Police and Criminal Evidence) fostering scheme in April 17 which was aimed at approving carers who could care for young people who have been arrested and would otherwise remain in custody. Luton initiated the scheme and the plan was for Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Council to work together with Luton Borough Council to recruit and run the PACE scheme, offering cover on a rota basis. There had been some difficulty in recruiting to this scheme despite external and internal advertising. The Service would continue to promote the scheme and work with Luton to ensure its success.
5. Last year the Fostering Service reviewed what was called the Youth Care Scheme and this was now known as Intensive Support. The target to recruit 10 Intensive Support carers by March 2018 was on track.
6. Work in progress included the development of a Parent and Child Scheme by March 2018.
7. The assessment for Family and Friends foster carers was nationally determined and was a very rigorous process. It took into account the current situation of the child, the impact of the placement, and how the child's life would be improved by the placement. Any placement which was felt not to be in the best interest of the child would be challenged.
8. The retention of Family and Friends foster carers was a national issue with the average foster carer providing care for 7½ years. Member's views and ideas on how to extend the service and support and encourage foster carers to continue were encouraged.
9. Whilst the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers was falling, they formed a small but significant increase in the care population with a resulting increase in placement costs.
10. A member expressed concern regarding the number of placements (three or more) that some of the Looked After Children were experiencing. In response the Panel was advised that a small group of Looked After Children exhibited challenging behaviour leading to placement breakdowns. In other cases placements could break down through incompatibility. The meeting noted that the original move into care also counted as a placement.

**NOTED**

**the Fostering Agency Report for Quarter 2.**

**That the report on Children's Social Worker stability would now be submitted to the meeting on the 15 January 2018.**

**RESOLVED**

- 1. that an update on those children who had had three or more placement moves and the reason for the moves would be provided at the March meeting.**
- 2. that a questionnaire for Foster Carers would be drafted and the results of the questionnaire would be shared with Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel.**

CPP/17/24. **Six Monthly Report in Respect of the Adoption Service 1 April - 30 September 2017**

The Panel considered the report outlining the activity in the Adoption Service in the period 1 April 2017 to 30 September 2017.

Points and comments included:

1. The introduction of the ability to enquire about the Adoption Service via social media has resulted in a significant increase in the enquiries received in this period in comparison with the previous six months
2. There were 22 households in assessment process at the end of this period. It was envisaged that the target of 20 approvals would be met within the next period.
3. The accessing of support and interventions continues to be a key area of Adoption placements. The Adoptive Support Fund (ASF) was an important source of funding as within the current financial year £76k of therapy support had been provided to adoptive families in Central Bedfordshire.
4. Due to the level of demand for the ASF the DfE had introduced a 'fair usage' cap of £5,000 per child and local authorities will have to share the costs of support over and above that limit through a match-funding approach.
5. Central Bedfordshire continued to be a partner within the Central East Regional Adoption Agency with six other Local Authorities.
6. Since April 2017, 4 of the 54 young people who ceased to be looked after were adopted. Year to date Adoption performance stood at 7.4% at the end of September 2017 which was below the set target of 20.0% but the expectation was that this target will be met by the end of the year.

7. The Ofsted report highlighted that in Central Bedfordshire the adoption process was taking place quickly, that the children were well prepared for adoption and that there was good quality adoptive support in place.

**NOTED**

**the Adoption Service report from 1 April 2017 to 30 September 2017.**

**RESOLVED**

that the details of the Adoption Family Christmas Party taking place on the 2 December 2018 would be circulated to Members of the Panel.

CPP/17/25. **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.

**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 the addition of:**

1. a report on Permanency Planning for children, including the process and early intervention.
2. a presentation on the PAUSE Programme to the Panel's meeting in January 2018 and a further spotlight report on PAUSE in March 2018.
3. a report on the possible exemption of care leavers from council tax charges at the January meeting.
4. an update on the development of an Action Plan arising from the Ofsted inspection at the January 2018 meeting.
5. that a review of the unscheduled reports on the Work Programme would be undertaken and that items that had already been considered would be removed.

CPP/17/26. **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/17/27. Final Report Virtual School for Looked After Children Academic Year 2015/16**

The Panel received the final report for the Virtual School for Looked After Children for the Academic Year 2015/16.

The Panel were advised that the DfE only released the Statistical First Release (SFR) in March 2016 and until this happened it had not been possible to provide any comparative data.

The report provided information on the role of the Virtual Schools and the validated outcomes at Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 for Looked After Children (LAC) in Central Bedfordshire in the Academic Year 2015/16 and identified the steps the Virtual School was taking in the current Academic Year 2016/17 in partnership with other agencies including schools and social care to raise the achievement and progress of all LAC.

**CPP/17/28. Interim Report Virtual School for Looked After Children Academic Year 2016/17**

The Panel received the Interim Report from the Virtual School for Looked After Children for the Academic Year 2016/17.

The report provided information on the role of the Virtual School and the unvalidated outcomes at Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 for Looked After Children (LAC) in Central Bedfordshire in the Academic Year 2016/17 and identifies the steps the Virtual School was taking in the current Academic Year 2017/18 in partnership with other agencies including schools and social care to raise the achievement and progress of all LAC.

The Panel considered in full the measures being taken to improve the educational attainments and recognised the progress and improvements which had been made.

**NOTED**

**The interim Report Virtual School for Looked After Children Academic Year 2016/17.**

**RESOLVED**

- 1. That the Panel be invited to attend a Personal Education Plan (PEP) Moderation meeting.**
- 2. That a sample of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) would be circulated to the Chairman of the Panel for information**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.28 p.m.)