

Central Bedfordshire Council

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

15 January 2017

Looked After Children Social Worker Churn

Report of Sue Harrison, Director of Children's Services
(Sue.Harrison@Centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Advising Officers:

Gerard Jones, Deputy Director for Safeguarding and Early Help
Gerard.Jones@Centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Ruth Coals, Head of Professional Standards and Principal Social Worker
Ruth.Coals@Centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Purpose of this report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide information for consideration on social work churn for looked after children in Central Bedfordshire.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Parenting Panel is asked to:

1. Note the content of the report
2. Comment on the report

Issues

Introduction

2. On 4 September 2017 the Corporate Parenting Panel considered the report of the Executive Member for Social Care and Housing which outlined activity in the Fostering Service from 1 January to 31 March 2017. It was noted that the employment stability of permanent social workers working in the Fostering Service with looked after children was very high at above 90%.
3. The Practice Manager for Conference and Review undertook to regularly include data regarding this issue in her annual report. However Members felt an initial report on looked after children social worker churn should be submitted for consideration by the Corporate Parenting Panel.

4. This report describes social work 'churn' for looked after children from January to December 2017. The majority of looked after children receive a service from social workers in the Corporate Parenting Service and for this reason the description of social work employment stability details this part of the service.
5. The Corporate Parenting Service is composed of the Court and Permanence Team, the Leaving and After Care Team and Fostering and Adoption. Looked after children up to the age of 15 receive a social work service from the Court and Permanence Team. Looked after children aged 15 to 18 years receive a social work service from the Leaving and After Care Team. The service also fulfils a statutory role in relation to Care Leavers aged up to 21 years old, 25 if attending in university, and asylum seekers. This includes the allocation of a Leaving Care personal adviser.

Findings

Churn in the Court and Permanence Team

6. The Court and Permanence Team is composed of 22 social workers and four social team managers – a total staff group of 26.
7. The management team has remained stable during 2017.
8. Of the 22 social worker positions in the Court and Permanence Team, six social workers have left the team during 2017. Three have taken up alternative social work posts within Central Bedfordshire. One has taken a sabbatical for personal reasons. One left the employment of Central Bedfordshire Council. One social worker who left was an agency worker employed from February to November 2017, covering a vacant post.
9. This means that in the Court and Permanency Team as a whole, including managers, there has been 77% staff stability over the last 12 months.

Churn in the Leaving and After Care Team

10. The Leaving Care and After Care Team is composed of two team managers each leading a group of social workers and personal advisers. Fully established, there are posts for seven social workers and 6.5 personal advisers - a total staff group of 15.5, including the two team managers.
11. The management team has remained stable over the last 12 months.
12. Of the nine social work positions in the Leaving and After Care Team, four social workers have vacated their position during 2017. One has been promoted to the position of Leaving and After Care team manager, filling the vacant team manager position from January 2017. One has begun a

secondment within another social work team. One has returned to her substantive post after completing a short-term secondment with the Leaving and After Care Team. One social worker has begun maternity leave.

Council Priorities

13. Ensuring that children have stable relationships with their allocated social workers is essential to the well-being of looked after children.

Corporate Implications

14. None

Legal Implications

15. None

Financial and Risk Implications

16. None

Equalities Implications

17. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Ensuring that looked after children are provided with stable relationships with their social workers enables Central Bedfordshire Council to achieve better outcomes for children and young people who are additionally vulnerable.

Conclusion and next Steps

18. Social worker stability of employment over the last 12 months in the Corporate Parent Team has been good, particularly in the Court and Permanency Team. Children's Services aspires to sustain and improved social worker stability as this supports good outcomes for children and young people.
19. Children's Services has a well-developed recruitment and retention programme. This includes a good training and development offer from

the Academy of Social Work and Early Help, and well-developed links with local universities through the Assessed and Supported Year Employment (initial post qualifying year for social workers), Step Up to Social Work and Frontline. Central Bedfordshire has additionally raised its profile as a good employer of social workers by securing the Employer of the Year at the recent Social Worker of the Year Awards and through securing a grading of Good during the June 2017 Ofsted Inspection.

20. Members may also be interested to see the Children's Commissioner's Stability Index report published in April 2017. This provides detail and analysis of national stability for looked after children in terms of education, placement and data from a pilot study into social worker stability.
<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Childrens-Commissioners-Stability-Index-Phase-One-Technical-Report-1.3.pdf>

Appendices

21. None

Background Papers

22. None