

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 15, Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford on Monday, 15 January 2018

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

Cllrs Mrs C Hegley (Chairman)
Mrs A L Dodwell (Vice-Chairman)
Mrs A Barker
N B Costin
Mrs A L Dodwell
M A G Versallion

Officers (voting)

Mrs J Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Carers (non-voting)

Mr P Albon

Apologies for Absence: Mrs J Edwards, Head Virtual School
Mrs S Harrison, Director of Children's Services
Mr G Jones, Deputy Director Safeguarding and Early Help
Mr D Thorne, Carer
Cllr B Wells, Deputy Executive Member for Community Services

Members in Attendance: Cllrs R D Berry
D Bowater
K Ferguson

Officers in Attendance:	Ms R Coals	Principal Social Worker and Head of Professional Standards
	Mr A Coman	Head of Corporate Parenting
	Ms J Edwards	Interim Virtual School Head Teacher
	Ms S Griffin	Committee Services Officer
	Ms K Mathu	CYP Participation Officer
	Ms T McDonald	Designated Nurse for Looked After Children
	Miss N Phillips	Practice Manager Adoption

Others in Attendance: For Children in Care Council

CPP/17/29. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 13 November 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendments:

Minute CPP/17/22 (Chairman's Announcements and Communications)

Amend the wording in paragraph four from 'the Head of Service, Family Support Service' to 'Head of Corporate Parenting'.

Amend the wording in the second bullet point in paragraph five from 'Adult Social Worker of the Year' to 'Children's Social Worker of the Year'.

CPP/17/30. **Members' Interests**

None received.

CPP/17/31. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The following announcements and communications were made:

- The Chairman reflected on the Social Worker of the Year Awards in November 2017. She congratulated the service for being named Best Social Work Employer and Jason Sedgman, Senior Practitioner in the Children with Disabilities Team, who received a silver award in the Children's Social Worker of the Year category.
- The Chairman advised the Panel that the Leader had made some changes to his Executive team, specifically, Cllr Steven Dixon, would assume responsibilities for Families, including both Education and Children's Social Care. The Chairman explained that she would retain responsibility for Adult Social Care and Housing Operations (HRA), dealing with the issues of an ageing population including Learning Disability services and would additionally take on responsibility for Customer Services.
- The Chairman Panel referred to the Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Panel which set out that the Executive Member for Children's Services would be Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel. The Panel were advised that Cllr Dixon would therefore take up the position of Chairman of Corporate Parenting Panel at the next meeting on the 5 March 2018.

Members of the Panel thanked Cllr Hegley for the excellent work she had undertaken during her role as Chairman which included raising the profile of Looked After Children.

CPP/17/32. **Central Bedfordshire Council Looked After Children Annual Report**

The Panel considered the report outlining the achievements, progress and challenges of the Looked After Children (LAC) health service in meeting the

health needs of Bedford Borough Council (BBC) and Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) children and young people in care, during the period from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

Points and comments included:

1. The Looked After Children Designated Nurse apologised for the delay in presenting the Annual Report which was due to a period of sickness. She explained that the information and data in the report related only to Central Bedfordshire, that Health data was received on a monthly basis from colleagues who attended Quality Meetings, that LAC services were commissioned by Public Health and that mental health services were commissioned from East London Foundation Trust (ELFT).
2. A lot of work had taken place around partnership working Health which included the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) sitting on the Child Sexual Exploitation Group (CSEG) and involvement with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and the Voice of the Child sub-group.
3. The Looked After Children Designated Nurse had taken on the responsibilities of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Lead as the post had only been commissioned by BCCG for one year.
4. There was now a single point of contact for CAMHS. Referrals were triaged via the appropriate service.
5. Norfolk County Council was leading the work on the East of England Protocol. The aim was for the Protocol to be implemented across Bedfordshire rather than a pilot. Feedback on the East of England Protocol.
6. As part of the Safeguarding Policy, each GP practice should have a designated lead for safeguarding children and young people. SystmOne, a patient data system used by GPs, included an icon for the identification of Looked After Children and was directly linked to the system used in Children's Services. Every GP practice and school should also have a Designate LAC Social Worker.
7. Central Bedfordshire had also signed up to The Child Protection - Information Sharing project (CP-IS), a new database which alerts Social Care and Health Care teams when a child known to social services and is a Looked After Child or on a Child Protection Plan, attended an NHS unscheduled care setting, such as an emergency department or a minor injury unit.
8. The 7 children who did not receive an Initial Health Assessment (IHA) were either unaccompanied Asylum Seekers who went missing before their IHA or were LAC who refused to have an assessment.
9. The average score for the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) had reduced year on year (14.5% in 2015/16 to 13.2% in 2016/17). A further reduction had been seen in January 2018 (12.3%).

10. Feedback received from parent carers was that Health representatives did not always attend Annual Review meetings. The Looked After Children Designated Nurse explained that the Designated Clinical Officer has the responsibility for SEND and that Health representation at Annual Review meetings could be either the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children, the Speech and Language Therapist or Occupational Therapist. Work was taking place to ensure future attendance.
11. Following a recent review, improvements had been made to the Health Passport For Looked After Children. Discussions continued about ways to make the paper copy more robust such as a hard cover.
12. Members of the Panel asked very challenging questions around the lateness of the report as the data presented was a year out of date. The Director of Social Care, Health and Housing advised that the timeliness of the report would be discussed with the Director of Children's Services and the content discussed with the Clinical Commissioning Group and relevant colleagues.
13. The Panel asked how issues that only pertained to CBC such as the shortfalls in health could be identified and understood?

NOTED

the Central Bedfordshire Looked After Children Annual Report.

RESOLVED

- 1. that an update on CAMHS be given at a future meeting.**
- 2. that an update on the East of England Protocol be given at a future meeting.**
- 3. that a copy of the Health Passport for Looked After Children be shared at a future meeting and an explanation on how the Passport works would be given.**

CPP/17/33. Adoption Fund

The Panel considered the report outlining the Department for Education Adoption Support Fund.

Points and comments included:

1. 11 applications for funding totalling £52, 055.00 had been submitted and agreed during this reporting period.
2. Family therapy was a key intervention. Feedback received from adoptive parents accessing this service was that therapy sessions were invaluable support and were key to maintaining family life and stability.

3. Funding was being used in more efficient ways such as the provision of therapeutic courses for 16 families in partnership with Bedford Borough and Milton Keynes Council.
4. The criteria for the Adoption Support Fund was clearly defined in terms of what services were in scope and were out of scope. The travel costs for therapy providers were limited as time should be spent providing therapy not travel time and mileage. Part of the role of the Adoption Support Service was to ensure efficient use of Adoption Support Fund and that the access and intervention was effective.
5. The Adoption Support Service determined the support and intervention needed which would be of benefit to the family. Throughout the process there were continued discussions about what approach was best for the family.
6. Central Bedfordshire was the hosting authority and lead for the design and development of the Regional Adoption Agency project. An outline business case had been developed and the Adoption Support Passport would be brought into alignment with the project. The perception was that the Regional Adoption Agency would be fully functional when the Adoption Support Fund was discontinued in March 2020.
7. The provision of therapeutic intervention Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP) continued to be a challenge in Bedfordshire.

NOTED

the report outlining the Department for Education Adoption Support Fund.

CPP/17/34. **LAC Social Worker 'Churn'**

The Panel considered the report outlining the Social Work churn for Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire.

Points and comments included:

1. The data gathered was for the 12 month period of January to December 2017. Although the data requested by the Panel was for Social Work churn for Looked After Children, some Looked After Children had a Social Worker as a temporary arrangement in other parts of the system other than the Corporate Parenting team.
2. The report was reassuring in terms of the stability of social workers. However it would be of interest to know how many social workers a Looked After Child whilst they are in care.
3. The Stability Index was a new initiative by the Children's Commissioner to measure the stability of the lives of children looked after by local authorities. A pilot had taken place involving 22 local authorities to gather data on the

number of placement moves, school moves and changes in social worker care. This initiative had not been adopted in Central Bedfordshire as yet.

4. The Head of Corporate Parenting explained that the data for Central Bedfordshire indicated that children in the Corporate Parenting Team had the same social worker in the majority of cases. Some of the planned changes were positive. The focus needed to be on unplanned changes which could be disruptive to the child or young person.
5. The national average number of cases seen to be manageable and safe for a social worker at one time was 16/18. However this number depended on the complexity of the case and associated court proceedings.
6. The Out of Hours Social Services Emergency Duty Team provided out of hours support for Adults and Children. A Head of Service is also on call at any one time.
7. The retention rate of Social Workers in Central Bedfordshire remained very positive with only 3 individuals moving on in the first year of employment for personal reasons. The average age of social workers in Central Bedfordshire was currently late 20's early 30's.
8. The Academy of Social Work and Early Intervention was a good success story around recruitment. The Academy worked with Social Workers as students and encouraged them to apply for a job with CBC when they finished university.
9. Concern was expressed about the effect of planned social worker moves on a child/young person which included the deterioration of a good relationship with their social worker, becoming very cynical and not wanting to engage. The potential impact on those involved such as Foster Carers also needed to be taken into account.
10. The change in social workers and the stability often came up in conversation between children in care and Children in Care Council ambassadors.
11. The effect of change in social worker on a child/young person should not be underestimated as the most important aspect was the person who talked and listened to the child and fed this information back to ensure stability.
12. It was important that the child and their family were aware of the journey of the adoption and fostering process, the possibility of different social workers, the aims, and the next steps.
13. The system needed to be reflected on to ensure who it was for and did it best meet the needs of the children and young people.
14. Did the reasons why an exceptional social worker was moved need to be explored? There could be the scenario of four children in the same household having different social workers. Were social workers in the right place at the right time and was 'Social Worker' the correct term to use?

15. It took time to build relationships and trust and it was important that the child did not have to tell their story numerous times. Each child has an individual plan (Child in Need or Child Protection Plan) which is regularly reviewed by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) reporting to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB).

NOTED

the Social Work churn for Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire.

RESOLVED

1. **that data be extracted to indicate the average number of social worker changes and the top 10 children affected and reported to a future meeting of the Panel, taking into account planned changes.**
2. **that the update at the March meeting on Children with three or more placements moves in 12 months placement would include data about outliers.**

CPP/17/35. Post Ofsted Inspection Action Plan

The Panel considered the report outlining Central Bedfordshire Council's Children's Services Post Ofsted Inspection Plan.

Points and comments included:

1. The Action Plan had been delivered by the 5 December 2017 and was currently in month 1 of implementation. Monthly monitoring of the plan would be undertaken by the Director of Children's Services and the Directorate Team for the first 3 months and quarterly thereafter.
2. After three months the decision would be made whether to continue to monitor the plan on a monthly basis or to reduce this to quarterly.
3. The Plan focussed on three key areas; training and learning; process changes and additional oversight and challenge
4. Feedback given from the Ofsted inspection included that Elected Members and the Corporate Parenting Panel should be more challenging and a critical friend and that the Children In Care Council Representative should be more robust and challenging at CPP meetings.
5. A specific programme would be put in place to look at the issue of Permanency.
6. After the summer, colleagues from other local authorities would be invited to take part in a Peer Review.
7. Were the headings on the Plan robust enough? Should the Plan include the person responsible for the area of work, milestones of what needed to

be achieved, an indicator of whether work was on track, success criteria to set out what the outcome looked like for the local authority and for children and families receiving the service and any financial constraints?

8. Did the Action Plan need to include information about the lack of perceived challenge from the Panel and demonstrate areas of challenge such as action and accountability by the Panel, benchmarking in the form of looking at work being undertaken by Corporate Parenting Panels and visits to local authorities rated as outstanding for children's services Ofsted inspections?
9. Was a mechanism needed to ensure that there was no slippage to the timeframes set in the Action Plan?

NOTED

the report outlining Central Bedfordshire Council's Children's Services Post Ofsted Inspection Plan.

RESOLVED

- 1. that the framework for the Peer review and the findings be reported at a future meeting of the Panel.**
- 2. that benchmarking be undertaken by looking at the work being undertaken by Corporate Parenting Panels in other local authorities.**

CPP/17/36. **The PAUSE Programme**

The Panel received a presentation on the Pause Programme.

Points and comments included:

- The Programme was about early support and prevention and the link into leaving care, early help and ongoing support.
- One of the aims was that this type of intervention and wraparound support would become part of the support package.
- The approach taken in Central Bedfordshire would be in the form of the project 'Walking Alongside You' (WAY) which would form part of the Team Around the Family based in Leighton Buzzard and would include the development of a Developing a local pathway to reduce the number of repeat removals of children into care.
- Visits had taken place to other local authorities to look at their approach and to ensure that work was not undertaken in isolation. The projects that had taken place so far seemed to be showing good results/outcomes in terms of the cohort.

NOTED

the presentation on the Pause Programme.

CPP/17/37. 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 updates:

- 1. CAMHS.**
- 2. the East of England Protocol.**
- 3. the Health Passport for Looked After Children.**
- 4. the average number of social worker changes and the top 10 children affected taking into account planned changes.**
- 5. the March meeting on Children with three or more placements moves in 12 months placement would include data about outliers.**
- 6. the framework for the Peer review and the findings.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 1.00 p.m.)