

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL** held at Room 14 - Priory House, Monks Walk, Shefford, SG17 5TQ on Thursday, 25 October 2018

PRESENT

Elected Members (voting)

Cllrs Mrs A L Dodwell (Chairman)
S Dixon (Vice-Chairman)
Mrs S A Goodchild
Mrs T Stock
M A G Versallion
B Wells

Officers (voting)

Mrs S Harrison Director of Children's Services
Mrs J Ogley Director of Social Care, Health and Housing

Carers (non-voting)

Mr P Albon
Ms S Daniel

Children in Care Representative (Co-Chairman) (non-voting)

Apologies for
Absence: Cllr Mrs A Barker
Ms C Hegley, Executive Member for Adults, Social Care and
Housing Operations (HRA)
Mr I Ilyasi, Foster Carer
Ms T Rowlands, Foster Carer
Ms S Rymell, Assistant Director of Safeguarding and Early Help
Mr L Youngman, Foster Carer

Members in Attendance: Cllrs N B Costin
K Ferguson
G Perham
R D Berry

Officers in
Attendance: Ms R Coals Principal Social Worker and Head of
Professional Standards
Mr A Coman Head of Corporate Parenting
Ms A Craig Practice Manager, Fostering
Ms S Griffin Committee Services Officer
Mrs S Keenan Practice Manager
Ms K Mathu CYP Participation Officer
Miss N Phillips Practice Manager Adoption

Others in Attendance: For Children in Care Council

CPP/18/13. **Minutes**

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on the 30 April 2018 and 26 July 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CPP/18/14. **Members' Interests**

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

CPP/18/15. **Chairman's Announcements and Communications**

The following announcements and communications were made:

1. On behalf of the Panel, the Chairman welcomed the Children in Care Council Representatives and Sharon Daniel, Foster Carer, to the meeting.
2. The Chairman referred to the Aspiration's Wish List which had been launched at Full Council. The list and locations had been looked in further detail. Panel members would be approached outside this meeting to discuss further opportunities that could be offered.
3. The Chairman advised that Children's Services Staff Awards had taken place on the 24 October, in recognition of the help Central Bedfordshire Council staff had given young people in care. Thanks were given to the Director of Children's Services for hosting the awards.
4. The Director of Children's Services explained that there had been 140 nominees from the 500 permanent staff in the directorate. The awards showed the comradery amongst the Children's Services staff and how much people wanted to recognise each other's success. Bedfordshire Police Protection Unit received the award for the team outside children's services for the work for the MASH.

The Children in Care Council Representative read out a speech which gave her perception of a young person in care. The speech was to be graded as part as her GCSE English exam.

The Chairman thanked the Children In Care Council Representative for her very thought provoking speech.

CPP/18/16. **Independent Reviewing Officers' Annual Report 2017 - 2018**

The Panel considered a report of the Director of Children's Services on the Independent Reviewing Officers' Annual Report for 2017-18. 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. A copy of the Annual Report was attached at Appendix A.

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

Points and comments included:

1. The format of the report is nationally agreed through all local authorities for the Corporate Parenting Panel and is a published document.
2. Page 47 paragraph 8.7 of the report referred to the grading of practice being consistently high. In terms of the national context and expectations against peers, the understanding is that Central Bedfordshire Council uses different scales to grade practice and that not every local authority uses grading or quality assurance forms. Central Bedfordshire is in the top quartile for achievement for its Looked After Children.
3. The Service has had an additional member of staff for a period of time as the number of Looked After Children had increased alongside the child protection number. However this post was currently under review.
4. In response to concerns raised about 60% of the sample group of children and young people feeling safe at school, the Practice Manager, Conference and Review Service explained this was a theme from a dip sample the previous year but was not an issue being raised through the Mind of My Own (MOMO) app used by children and young people to provide feedback on their wishes and feelings. The issue of feeling safe at school would have been shared with the social worker allocated to the young person to be discussed and addressed at an individual meeting with the young person.
5. It was a statutory requirement for a Looked After Child to be asked if they would like an Independent Visitor or Social Worker. A piece of work needed to be undertaken around explaining the concept and role of an Advocate in terms of helping to make sure that the voice of the child/young person was heard when decisions about their life were being made.
6. The Head of Professional Standards and Principle Social Worker explained that an Advocate solely reported on the views of the young person whereas the Social Worker/Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) listening to the views of the young person and took these views into account when evaluating the needs of the young person. The Advocacy Service is located within Children's Services. It is separate from the Social Work and is offered independently on behalf of Central Bedfordshire Council Service. The young person and the Advocacy service agree who the right person to provide support would be.
7. The timing of Looked After Children reviews is specified in regulation. The first review has to be held within 20 working days of the child/young person becoming looked after and the second review within 3 months. Subsequent

reviews are at intervals of no more than 6 months. Mid-way review meetings had just been introduced in Central Bedfordshire. The purpose of these reviews was to assess cases and to speak to Social Workers to ensure that all of the tasks were being achieved and were on time and there was no potential for delay. There was the ability for reviews to take place sooner if there were any concerns, a significant change of circumstances or change of care plan.

8. A member of the Panel referred to paragraph 5.24 of the report which advised that since the introduction of the MOMO app, 162 young people had contributed to the Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children - Voice of the Child Survey of which 91 (56%) were girls and 71 (44%) were boys. It was felt that it would be more beneficial for the Panel to be advised of the size of the cohort as a percentage rather than as data.
9. The Director of Children's Services explained that in response to the Ofsted recommendation about the effectiveness of plans being updated and assurance of progression, an action plan had subsequently been implemented with a measure against each action and how the actions were being achieved.
10. The Practice Manager Conference and Review Service explained that following a key area highlighted in the Ofsted report of being able to achieve and demonstrate permanency for young people, the definition of permanency had subsequently reviewed and a permanency tracking meeting implemented to monitor the stage of a child on their journey.
11. The Practice Manager Conference and Review Service advised that the quality assurance element of the organisation helped to ensure the independence of the IRO from the Social Worker. Good practice models around supervision and the peer practice challenge insured that services were being held to account and checks and balances were in place to ensure that practices were continually reviewed and outcomes achieved.

NOTED

the activity of the Conference and Review Service in relation to case management and review of Looked After Children during 2017-18 as set out within the Independent Reviewing Officers' Annual Report.

CPP/18/17. Looked After Children Social Worker Stability

The Panel considered a report of the Director of Children's Services which set out Social Work stability for Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire.

Points and comments included:

1. The Head of Professional Standards and Principal Social Worker explained that the key reason for a change of Social Worker in Central Bedfordshire during the journey of a child as in many other local authorities, was due the change in needs and circumstances of the

child. The transfer points and related changes of social worker were built into processes and formed part of the child's journey so that the child received specialist support and expertise that was responsive to the particular circumstances of the child.

2. In Central Bedfordshire Social Work churn is low. Some Social Workers changed their role within the service area as part of their career development.
3. Children's Services, Central Bedfordshire Council is committed to Looked After Children having as much consistency as possible throughout their journey as this was pivotal to their wellbeing. Any change to Social Worker was done in a planned way in consultation with the young person/child.
4. When a young person becomes a Looked After Child they are allocated an Independent Reviewing Officer. The IRO did not change during the child's journey.
5. The Director of Children's Services advised that in terms of vacancies, Children's Services was performing well overall. Key issues to address were having permanent skilled members of staff, reducing the use of agency staff. An area of focus was stabilising the workforce. Over the last two years the percentage of agency staff had reduced from 52% to 11% and work continued to increase these figures. A refresh of the Recruitment and Retention Strategy was also being undertaken.
6. A key message emerging from Looked After Children was that social workers needed to commit to working with a child for the minimum of one year. This directive would be added to the requirements of the Service.

NOTED

Social Work stability for Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire.

RESOLVED

1. **that a report on the number of placement moves for Looked After Children (10 children from the two age ranges of 0-4 and over 16), over the period of 3 years per 10,000 of the population be given at December meeting of the Panel.**
2. **that the Children's Commissioner Stability Index be brought back to the Corporate Parenting Panel in 12 months.**

CPP/18/18. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

RESOLVED

To exclude the press and public from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that its consideration involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

CPP/18/19. The Day in the Life of a Looked After Child

The Panel received an exempt presentation on the Day in the life of a Looked After Child.

CPP/18/20. Children in Care Council - presentation on social work stability

The Panel received an exempt presentation from the Children in Care Council representatives on social work stability.

On conclusion of the consideration of exempt minute items CPP/18/20 and CPP/18/21, the meeting was open to Press and Public.

CPP/18/21. Foster Carers Loans Policy

The Panel considered a report of the Executive Member Families, Education and Children and Lead Member for Children's Services which defined the scheme for the provision of an interest-free loan to adoptive/fostering households, who wish to extend to convert their homes in order to offer a wider range or number of placements To Central Bedfordshire Children in Care.

Points and comments included:

1. The main drivers for the Foster Carers Loan Scheme were to achieve the objectives of the Children's Services Transformation Programme to increase the number of Central Bedfordshire Council in-house foster carers and the ability to be able to place Looked After Children and young people in the Central Bedfordshire.
2. The scheme would provide the additional capacity for larger sibling groups to be accommodated in one household where possible.
3. Applications for the Loan Scheme would be considered in time order (a first come basis) then in the following priority order:
 - Priority 1- Foster carers who can offer placements to:
 - Sibling groups
 - Children aged 12 years old and above
 - Permanent placements
 - Priority 2 -Foster carers who can offer placements to 5 - 9-year olds
 - Priority 3 - Foster carers who can offer placements to Under 5-year olds
4. The contract would stipulate what the funding was being provided for, the level of funding and the repayment arrangements. It would also include

details of the expected period of service of a Foster Carer in receipt of the loan, the repayment of outstanding amounts should the Foster Carer resign or the service be terminated and a mechanism to ensure that the loan was recovered should the contract be defaulted upon.

5. The approval process would include a financial assessment to ensure that the Foster Carer was able to make the required repayments of the loan.

RESOLVED

that the Foster Carer Loan Scheme as set out in Appendix A of the report, be approved and adopted.

CPP/18/22. Fostering Quarter 1 Report

The Panel considered a report of the Executive Member for Families, Education and Children and Lead member for Children's Services which set out the Fostering Agency Report for Quarter 1 covering the period 1 April – 30 June 2018.

Points and comments included:

1. The Practice Manager, Fostering Team advised that placement stability was a real success in Central Bedfordshire both short and long term and continued to remain strong. The figures for Central Bedfordshire were very favourable in comparison with statistical neighbours and the national average.
2. A member of the Panel sought reassurance that the Council was vigilant in ensuring that children subject to Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) were not exposed to some of the issues/reasons the Order had been put in place. The Head of Corporate Parenting explained that an SGO included the requirement for a report to be provided advising appropriate placements for child. An assessment of the carers and the child also took place and recommendations were made to the Court on the appropriate placements. The Fostering Service and SGO Support Service also provided a level of support during this process.
3. In response to a question raised about Private Fostering and the awareness of safeguarding services, the Head of Corporate Parenting explained that advertising of the services provided by Central Bedfordshire Council took place in various way such as campaigns in schools and that safeguarding training for General Practitioners included an explanation about private fostering and the criteria, and ways of raising any safeguarding concerns.

NOTED

the Fostering Agency Report for Quarter 1 for the period of 1 April – 30 June 2018.

CPP/18/23. **Regional Adoption Agency**

The Panel received a report on the Regional Adoption Agency.

Points and comments included:

1. The Acting Practice Manager, Central Bedfordshire Adoption Service explained that Local Authorities currently delivered Adoption Services in slightly different ways and different services were provided depending on the location/postcode.
2. The main benefits of the introduction of a Regional Adoption Agency for existing adoptive parents included the pooling of budgets, a more efficient provision of services and the upskilling of staff to provide therapies and greater support.
3. The Director of Children's Services explained that the provision of Post adoptive support had been identified as a particular area of focus. As part of the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership, work was taking place with health colleagues around the provision of adoption support services.
4. A member of the Panel referred to the launch of the Regionalising Adoption programme in by the DfE in 2015 and the aim of encouraging all local authorities to work together with voluntary adoption agencies to regionalise their adoption services and asked why more local authorities were not involved in the programme. The Director of Children's Services explained that discussions were taking place about the potential of other neighbouring authorities joining the Central East Regional Adoption Agency. Local Authorities needed to be of a similar culture to ensure that there was no dilution of standards.

Panel members would invited to the launch of the service in April 2019.

Thanks were given to Acting Practice Manager, Adoption Service for the work undertaken to develop the Regional Adoption Agency.

NOTED

the presentation outlining the progress of the Regional Adoption Agency.

CPP/18/24. **Personal Advisor and financial support offered to young people leaving care**

This item was deferred to the December meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

CPP/18/25. **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 2018/19.

RESOLVED

- 1. 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 following amendments:**
 - a. Numbers of Looked After Children per 10,000 of the population would added as a standing agenda item.**
 - b. 20 December 2018**
Report on the number of placement moves for a LAC - 10 children from each age range (0-4 and over 16) over a 3 year period per 10,000 of the population.
 - c. Unscheduled reports**
 - Foster Carer Loan Policy update**
 - Looked After Children Social Worker Stability - Children's Commissioner Stability Index**
- 2. the 12-month forward plan be considered at the Children's Services Management Team and revised work plan be presented at the December meeting of the Panel.**

(Note: The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and concluded at 12.35 p.m.)

Chairman.....

Dated.....

This page is intentionally left blank