

Minutes of the meeting of the CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL held on TUESDAY
23 JUNE 2020 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor M Bradburn (Chair)
Councillors K Bradburn, Brown, V Hopkins (Vice-Chair), Marlow, Miles
(Vice-Chair) and Townsend

Officers: M Heath (Director - Children's Services), S Heer (Head of Corporate
Parenting), M Mellor (Virtual School Headteacher), M May (Head of
Delivery [Children's Social Work]), R Lee (Team Leader [Participation
and Engagement Team]) and J Crighton (Committee Manager)

Also Present: Councillor Nolan

CPP01 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None disclosed.

CPP02 MINUTES

Councillor M Bradburn thanked S Muir, who had retired from the
Council, for her hard work in supporting the Panel.

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel
held on 21 January 2020 and the special meeting held on 20 May
2020, be approved and signed by the Chair as correct records.

CPP03 TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED -

That the Terms of Reference be agreed.

CPP04 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL - TRAINING FOR MEMBERS

The Panel received a presentation from M Heath (Director -
Children's Services) about the purpose of the Panel and the role of
councillors as corporate parents.

The Panel noted that it had a unique responsibility for Children in
Care and Care Leavers to ensure that their individual needs were
met.

S Heer (Head of Corporate Parenting) informed the Panel that the Children and Social Work Act 2017 had introduced key principles that local authorities must consider when exercising their function or role in relation to Children in Care and Care Leavers, namely to:

- (a) act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of children and young people;
- (b) encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- (c) take into account children and young people's views, wishes and feelings;
- (d) make sure children and young people had access to services;
- (e) make sure children and young people were safe, with stable home lives, relationships and education or work;
- (f) promote high aspirations and try to secure the best outcomes for them; and
- (g) prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

The Panel noted that the Children in Care Council, or 'Our Voice' as it was known in Milton Keynes, was a Forum where a group of Children in Care and Care Leavers shared their views and experiences about the support and services that had been provided to them.

It was noted that feedback was a key resource in order to improve outcomes for Children in Care and Care Leavers. Key Performance Indicators would be presented to the Panel to help it determine which areas of support were working well and where improvements were needed.

It was reported that the number of Children in Care had risen in the last decade while levels of adoptions had fallen over the last four years, which was a concern.

RESOLVED -

That the presentation be noted.

CPP05

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

The Panel considered the Panel's Annual Report 2019/20.

It was noted that there had been a steady increase in Looked after Children from the period June to December 2019, but this appeared to be declining from January 2020.

- (b) an Emotional Wellbeing Worker be recruited to support the specific mental health needs of Care Leavers as well as the focused participation of young people.

It was requested that an Executive Summary of the Annual Report be provided for Full Council and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that this would be challenging given the time constraints but would be considered going forward.

The Chair raised some areas where she believed additional work was required, as follows:

- (a) liaison with developers in regard to suitable accommodation for care leavers;
- (b) health assessments should include statistics on smoking and obesity; and
- (c) a review of the specific risks for foster carers' in Milton Keynes.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Annual Report 2019/20 be presented to Full Council in September 2020.
2. That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee be requested to scrutinise the Annual Report 2019/20 recommendations.
3. That the letter from Mark Riddell be provided to the Panel.

CPP06

PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT / CHAMPION MODEL

The Panel considered a report on the Participation and Engagement / Champion Model.

R Lee (Team Leader [Participation and Engagement Team]) informed the Panel that a Champion Model was being developed to understand the views of children, young people's and care leavers' about being looked after in Milton Keynes.

The Panel noted that it was proposed that all members of the Council should be a 'Champion' for a specific portfolio and be given the opportunity to feel confident and assured in their understanding of the experience of the Council's Looked after Children.

It was further noted that, in order to gain evidence of the views of children, young people and care leavers, it was intended that members of the Panel would visit teams, settings or young people between Panel meetings which would enable Panel members to

The Panel noted that Care Plans had been reviewed within specific cohorts, which entailed securing permanency for children who could return home to their parents or family, revoking Care for those children at home with their parent, placing children for adoption without delay and liaising with those carers who would consider a Special Guardianship Order rather than care.

It was also evident that the number of Court Care Proceedings not concluding within the 26-week period impacted on children remaining in care longer than necessary. However, in some cases it was necessary to undertake further assessments in respect of family circumstances or, because of the complex nature of the case, a timeframe beyond 26 weeks was necessary.

The Panel noted that the health assessment process still required improvement as delays in receiving reports had impacted on timescales. However, it was noted that assessments would be recorded from the time they occurred rather upon the receipt of the report. This would improve timescales and prioritise reports in line with a child's health needs.

It was noted that progress on dental checks had fallen due to Covid-19.

The Panel noted that Milton Keynes, in partnership with Central Bedfordshire Council, had become a part of a Regional Adoption Agency on 1 April 2019. The lead authority was Central Bedfordshire and the adoption partnership was known as 'Adoption Connect'.

The Panel expressed concern at the possibility of housing Care Leavers at the YMCA. It was noted that a pathway plan would be developed for all Care Leavers, and the Participation Team would be involved in their support.

It was reported that Mark Riddell, Government Advisor for Care Leavers, had visited the Council in April 2019 and had made a number of recommendations to improve the outcomes for Children in Care transitioning to adulthood and leaving care.

It was noted that Mark Riddell further visited the Council in February 2020 and, although he had welcomed the improvements that had been achieved, he made a number of additional recommendations, as follows:

- (a) a structured allocation of cases based on age and level of need;

provide evidence about how they championed the views of young people to Cabinet, Council or the Committees they served on.

RESOLVED -

1. That a Steering Group be established to include young people.
2. That Permanency / Fostering / Adoption be included on the Panel's Work Programme.

CPP07

JOINT TARGETED AREA INSPECTION PLAN

The Panel considered a report on the Joint Targeted Area Inspection Plan.

The Panel noted that there had been no areas of concern and the Plan was also being considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED -

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee be requested to advise how it thought the Inspection Plan sat with the Panel and the role it played.

CPP08

COVID-19 UPDATE

The Panel received an update from M Heath (Director - Children's Services) on the impact Covid-19 had had on children and young people.

The Panel noted that Children's Services had faced a number of challenges arising from the Covid-19 Pandemic, to help address those and to ensure the Council was following the correct Guidance, meetings had been held with the Department of Education twice a week since the beginning of the pandemic.

It was reported that Looked after Children and those considered vulnerable had returned to school, although GCSEs and A Levels had been cancelled and students would receive predicted grades.

It was further noted that Adoption hearings had been cancelled and virtual meetings had been held with foster carers.

CPP09

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel would be held on Wednesday 9 September 2020 at 6.30 pm.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 8:40 PM