

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL**12 JULY 2016**

Report submitted to Council – 8 June 2016

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE WORK OF THE MILTON KEYNES CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL 2015/16

Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel: Councillor Miles

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Executive Summary:

The Milton Keynes Corporate Parenting Panel was established by the Council as a committee of the Council to oversee the discharge of the Council's responsibilities as a Corporate Parent to those children and young people who are in the care of Milton Keynes Council as well as those leaving its care. This annual report provides councillors with an overview of the children and young people for whom the Council is a 'Corporate Parent' and summarises the areas covered by the Panel during the council year 2015/16. The report also suggests potential areas of focus for the Panel's consideration in 2016/17. All councillors are invited to suggest any additional issues which they as Corporate Parents would like the Panel to address.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 The Council is recommended to:

- (a) Receive the report and note the needs of the children and young people for whom it is Corporate Parents;
- (b) Note the work undertaken on its behalf in 2015/16 by the Corporate Parenting Panel and;
- (c) Note and comment upon the emerging agenda for the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel in 2016/17.

2. Issues

- 2.1 Essential information for all Corporate Parents about the children and young people living in and leaving Milton Keynes Council Care is included in the Annex to the report.
- 2.2 Milton Keynes Corporate Parenting Panel, Chaired by Councillor Miles, which in addition comprised Councillors Betteley, Cannon, Clancy, Crooks, V Hopkins, Nolan and Patey-Smith, met formally on five occasions during the 2015/16 Council year.

2.3 During the year, the Panel has received and considered reports from key professionals about a number of priority issues. The Panel has met with these key professionals through their attendance at Panel and have engaged in discussion. The key issues covered were:

- **A review of models for Corporate Parenting Panels.** The Panel considered a paper presented by the Interim Head of Corporate Parenting, Mr Reiter, which outlined a number of different models for organising Corporate Parenting Panels, taking into account national guidance and best practice models from other Local Authorities whose services had been judged good by Ofsted. The focus was upon consideration of three key areas: Panel membership, chairing arrangements and means of engagement with Children in Care. The Panel considered the information within the report and agreed a way forward for the Panel. This was later revisited in the final meeting of the Council year when the Head of Corporate Parenting, Ms Lockwood, presented a briefing in respect of developing a vision for the Panel for the incoming Council year.
- **The health of Children in Care.** The Panel received and reviewed the annual report for the statutory health services provided to Milton Keynes Children in Care during the year 2014/15. Discussion took place around key areas from the report including the increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum seekers and the main issues around these. These were identified as being lack of medical records and histories, post-traumatic stress and low weights and medical conditions that had not been treated properly. The Specialist Nurse for Children in Care highlighted the advice that all young unaccompanied asylum seekers should be screened through a formal process that identified health issues. The proactive working of the social workers and independent review officers (IRO) were also highlighted in this area. There was also discussion around data collation for substance misuse data and support provided to teenage pregnancies. Priorities for the coming year for the health provision were also outlined within the report.
- **The education of Children in Care.** Education of Children in Care in Milton Keynes has been discussed by the Panel on multiple occasions during the Council year. The Virtual School head teacher, Mrs Mellor, presented the annual report to the Panel as well as a presentation about the outcomes for Children in Care in 2015. Case studies were considered as part of the annual report as well as a review of the priorities for 2014/15 and details of the new priorities for 2015/16. Information was also provided regarding the exclusion data and strategies used to support those at risk of exclusion.

At an earlier meeting, the Panel were presented with information and statistics for the summer 2015 interim GCSE results for Children in Care. Panel discussed the support that Councillors could give as Corporate Parents to children in care in education.

During the year, the Panel also discussed work experience opportunities for looked after children and whether the Council's procurement frameworks could assist in this. Information was provided about the work that was ongoing by Community Learning MK in this developing this area in partnership with care leavers.

- **Children in Care and Youth Justice.** The Panel received a report and presentation from the Head of Youth Justice, Mr Westlake, providing information regarding children in the care of Milton Keynes Council who are in contact with the youth justice system during the year 2014/15. The report also considered the provision of remand accommodation for young people refused bail by the police following charge and provided information about the extension of Local Authority responsibilities in this area. It was noted that the numbers in Milton Keynes were quite low. Panel challenged the need for young people to be detained in custody and subsequent discussion took place around a high challenge by social workers and scenarios that may lead to police detention. There was also discussion regarding the number of children kept in custody who have special educational needs and the role of safeguarding.
- **Regionalisation of Adoption (RAA) and the work being undertaken by Milton Keynes.** Throughout the year, there have been a number of presentations to the Panel regarding the regionalisation of adoption services and the work that Milton Keynes is participating in as part of this. Panel has been provided with information about the three RAA initiatives that the Council has been part of since its inception. This has included being provided with details of one initiative which ended and two that are ongoing. Panel have considered information about the RAA in general and also the challenges and priorities for Milton Keynes in making decisions about which initiative to fully join in June 2016. This work is ongoing and progress reports will continue to be provided to the Corporate Parenting Panel in 2016/17.
- **Child in Care costs and financial projects.** Panel considered the costs for children in care and the projects that were in place to address these. This included the costs associated with the use of agency staff and the work being undertaken to reduce this and legal costs for proceedings. Discussion also took place around the number of Children in Care who were placed 'out of area' and the impact of this upon budgets as well as response provided about the mechanisms in place to monitor and review this as well as further details regarding children being placed with family and friends and that these can sometimes be 'at a distance'. Subsequent presentations were made to Panel about the **Placement sufficiency** strategy and project which has the remit of increasing 'in house' placement, particularly for adolescents, and preparing children for a move from residential to foster placement and moving out of care when appropriate. There is also an emphasis on moving children out of external placements and increasing provisions for young people who are aged 16 years and higher.

- **Social Care Workforce.** The Panel was also presented with information about the children's social care workforce in comparison with geographical neighbours and the south east region. This included information that Milton Keynes had the second lowest rate of usage for agency staff amongst geographical neighbours and third lowest in the south east region and the second lowest vacancy rate amongst our geographical neighbours. The Panel considered this information and discussion took place about proactive recruitment strategies that have been put in place to address any staffing gaps.
- **Development of the Corporate Parenting Service.** The Panel was provided with details about the development work that is taking place within the Corporate Parenting Service. This includes the corporate parenting team, fostering team and adoption team with the latter referring to the RAA work that is ongoing. This work is ongoing and progress reports will be provided to the Corporate Parenting Panel in 2016/17.

2.4 During the year 2015/16, the Corporate Parenting Panel has continued to engage with children and young people in care. This has included members of the Panel visiting residential units, Furze House and Westminster Drive as well as Walnuts, and meeting with parents, children and staff. The Panel has also reviewed the progress of these units through the consideration of the monthly Regulation 44 visits undertaken by an independent visitor during the year and detailed within reports presented to the Panel. Reports have also been presented to the Panel about the work of the Children in Care Council: Today's Children Tomorrow's Future and members have attended meetings with them as well as attending events such as Fostering Fun Day and True Triumph (celebration and awards evening for Children in Care). Participation and the engagement of children and young people remains a high priority for the Corporate Parenting Panel and members have contributed to discussions about how best to enable young people to contribute to the Council's work with them.

3. Options

- 3.1 The 2016/17 Corporate Parenting Panel will consider the options for its effective operation and agenda setting at its inaugural meeting for the coming year.
- 3.2 Priorities for the forthcoming year will also be considered. Areas of work from the previous year that will continue into the forthcoming year include the RAA and the development of the corporate parenting service.

4. Implications

Policy

- 4.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel can consider the impact of any Council policy upon children in care and care leavers.

Resources and Risk

- 4.2 The Corporate Parenting Panel comments upon but does not hold decision making responsibility for resource allocation and budgetary decisions which impact upon children care and care leavers.
- 4.3 The Council's responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of individual children in care and care leavers is an area of high risk, mitigated by the provision of high quality professional social work, care placements and support services.

Carbon and Energy Management.

- 4.4 The Panel's work in 2015/16 has not explicitly considered carbon and energy management issues.

Legal

- 4.5 The Council's role as a Corporate Parent is governed by legislation (primarily the Children Act 1989), associated guidance and regulations and case law. The Council's legal department provides clear advice as required by officers in their discharge of the council's corporate parenting responsibilities for individual children and young people.

5. Other implications

Y	Equalities/Diversity	N	Sustainability	Y	Human Rights
N	E-Government	Y	Stakeholders	N	Crime and Disorder

Background papers: Milton Keynes Children in Care (Looked After Children) and Care Leavers Key Data 2015/16