



Minutes of the meeting of the CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL held on WEDNESDAY
9 DECEMBER 2020 at 6.30 pm

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

Officers: M Heath (Director - Children's Services), S Heer (Head of Corporate Parenting), M May (Group Head - Children's Social Care), T Molloy (Principal [Community Learning Service]), R Williams (Virtual School Headteacher) and R Tidman (Committee Services Manager)

Apologies: Councillor Marlow

Also Present: Councillor Nolan and two young people

CPP20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor M Bradburn advised that she works with an Educational Trust (SIEVEMK).

CPP21 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 9 September 2020 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

CPP22 CARE LEAVER'S WEEK

T Molloy, the Principal - Community Learning Service, updated the Panel on activities that were undertaken during Care Leaver's Week including an increased use of Instagram. The Council also asked for feedback from young people in care about their experiences with Covid particularly regarding housing and education.

It was noted that where English was a second language the lockdowns had led to difficulties with virtual learning and a lack of opportunity to socialise to help improve language skills. In some cases, learning had plateaued as a result.

S Heer, Head of Corporate Parenting, advised the Panel that Care Leaver's Week took place between 26 and 30 October 2020. During the week there was a number of events including the launch of the Instagram page, webinars and live streams.

The Instagram page is a private page for care leavers to share their experiences and share information about access to services or opportunities.

RESOLVED -

1. That the update be noted.
2. That further consideration be given to the use of social media and how to improve engagement with care leavers.

CPP23

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES (ILACS) IN MILTON KEYNES

The Panel received an update on the inspection of Local Authority Children's Services from M Heath, Director - Children's Services. Usually an inspection like this would take place every three years but Covid had meant a delay to the inspection and the issuing of a grade in the usual way.

Ofsted identified only two areas of improvement which were both linked to capacity issues in September when there was an increase in demand into the service. The main areas of focus for this Panel was:

- (a) some Pathway Plans were not considered to be comprehensive enough and did not always contain clear action plans to achieve positive change and did not always sufficiently capture plans for care leavers and NEETs;
- (b) the Virtual School and children's personal education plans were of variable quality;
- (c) placement sufficiency was an increasing challenge and accommodation options were needed;
- (d) it was noted that there should be increased recording and evidencing of management oversight and supervision; and
- (e) better use of performance reporting and technology was required.

It was clarified that the issue with note taking was with the rationale for decision making and management decisions for example - when, how and why decisions had been made.

RESOLVED -

1. That the update be noted.
2. That officers be thanked for the marked improvement that has been made in the service since 2016.
3. That the Director - Children's Services be asked to bring back a Development Plan to the next meeting of the Panel.
4. That the Director - Children's Services be asked to circulate to Panel members the JTAI Ofsted Report.

CPP24

SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY

The Panel received an update on the Sufficiency Strategy from S Heer, Head of Corporate Parenting.

Sufficiency of Placement was a legal duty and responsibility on all local authorities to identify placements for children in care within a 20-mile radius. In Milton Keynes 79% of children were placed locally. The Council's approach is to undertake as much preventative work as possible to maintain children in their home where possible before bringing a child into care.

Sufficiency is affected by the growing population which also leads to an increase in the number of Children in Care. This number fluctuates across the year from 427 children in December 2019 to 392 in December 2020. There was an External Placement Panel which reviewed for example: placements; costs of care; was a child's needs being met; could a child be stepped down from care.

Stability of placement was important as the Council tried to ensure that children did not have more than three moves while they were in care. Children are usually 'matched' to a placement so they can see the stability of a forever family.

Recruitment of carers was an area for development as the number of carers was reducing due to the age of those involved. There was work being undertaken to recruit carers from different backgrounds. Carers have regular supervision, training and support and this was reviewed annually.

Currently 94% of care leavers were in appropriate accommodation. A joint housing protocol between social care and housing was being developed to ensure that care leavers were in suitable accommodation. There were nine care leavers currently in custody and exit plans needed to be developed for these young people to

ensure they progressed into suitable accommodation once they were released.

The pandemic has affected sufficiency as a number of carers had to isolate and were not able to take placements. However, they did provide support to other carers during this time. This led to an increase in costs with more agency placements required. There was increasing mental health issues which lead to an increase in moves or costs of higher needs facilities and two high risk children required secure placements due to the risk they posed to themselves or others.

The Head of Corporate Parenting outlined the difference between internal foster carers who were supported and managed by the Council and independent fostering agencies who were external placements which were generally more costly, and the Council was not in control of their training or supervision.

RESOLVED -

1. That the update be noted.
2. That the Head of Corporate Parenting provide the Panel with the data around the number of children in care who have had to move more than three times.

CPP25

ACHIEVING EARLY PERMANENCE STRATEGY

The Panel received a presentation from M May, Group Head of Children's Social Care. Early Permanence was a child centred practice to ensure that those children who are unable to live with their birth family were placed with their permanent substitute families at the very earliest opportunity, preventing multiple moves and avoiding future attachment issues.

The Panel noted that, a better communication plan was required to recruit younger foster carers or potential adoptive parents and that a diverse range of carers were needed to provide a loving, stable home environment for a child. A range of carers was needed for example holiday respite, mother and child support and lodging support for a young person stepping on to independence.

RESOLVED -

1. That the update be noted.
2. That the Director - Children's Services be asked to provide the Panel with more information about a communication plan for foster recruitment at their next meeting.

3. That the Virtual School Headteacher be asked to send the Panel a link to their recent recruitment webinar.

CPP26

PROGRESS ON CARE LEAVERS EMPLOYMENT, APPRENTICESHIPS, EDUCATION AND WORK PROJECTS - UPDATE

M Heath, Director - Children's Services, provided an update on Care Leavers who were not specifically in education or training. The creation of the 16-24 team just over a year ago had led to improvements in targeted advice and guidance. In April 2020, 51% of Care Leavers in Milton Keynes were NEET this had increased to 64% at the end of October 2020. This compared to a figure of 54% nationally. The Virtual School was carrying over pupil premium funding to help Year 12 students with any programmes which may encourage them to stay in education.

The Council was looking at the new Kickstart scheme as to how opportunities for young people on Universal Credit could be provided with work placements or how the Council could act as a gateway organisation to encourage other businesses in the area to take on young people through this scheme.

RESOLVED -

1. That the update be noted.
2. That the Director - Children's Services be asked to provide an oral update at the next Panel meeting on progress with the Kickstart scheme.

CPP27

CHAMPION MODEL

T Molloy, Principal - Community Learning Service, updated the Panel on progress with the Champion Model. Six members have so far agreed to be Champions in the areas of - Education, Permanency, Fostering, Adoption, SEND, Children in Care and Safeguarding. Five more Champions were required for the remaining areas. The Steering Group was reviewing the information that goes out to members to ensure members were aware of how they can be involved.

RESOLVED -

That the update be noted.

CPP28

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel would be held on Tuesday 16 March 2021 at 6.30 pm.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 8:45 PM