



Minutes of the CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL held on TUESDAY 21 JANUARY 2020 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillors K Bradburn, M Bradburn, V Hopkins, Nazir, Raja and Townsend.

Officers: M Heath (Director Children's Services), S Heer (Interim Head of Corporate Parenting), M Mellor (Virtual School Head Teacher), N Phillips (Adoptions Manager) and S Muir (Committee Manager).

Apologies: Councillors Brown, Marlow (Substituted by Councillor Raja) and Miles (Chair)

Also present: Councillor Nolan (Cabinet member for Children and Families) and 7 members of the public including Care Leavers.

CP39 ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor V Hopkins proposed, Councillor K Bradburn seconded and it was agreed unanimously that Councillor M Bradburn be elected as Chair of this meeting

CP40 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

None received.

CP41 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 12 November 2019 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record subject to the words "that these" being removed from the penultimate paragraph at Minute C34 on Page 14.

CP42 UPDATE ON ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

- (a) The Interim Head of Corporate Parenting indicated that the Champion Model Approach was being further refined and would be distributed to Panel members in due course.
- (b) Councillor M Bradburn (Vice Chair) welcomed the Care Leavers who were in attendance and thanked them for attending.
- (c) The Director of Children's Services gave an update about the recent Joint Targeted Area Inspection and advised that the a link to the Joint Targeted Area Inspector's report would be provided

with the minutes from this meeting, however he was able advise that these type of inspections there isn't a grading but a list of the strengths and areas that needed to be progressed in the Service, and that overall there were no priority actions. He added that a team of 10 Ofsted inspectors had spent three weeks in October 2019 examining the services provided by Milton Keynes Council and that this was only the second time that an Inspection had been carried out on this theme of Children & Young People and Mental Health.

The Director of Children's Services thanked all those involved in the Inspection and indicated that the key themes noted by the Inspectors were:

- The ambition and commitment to Mental Health Services for Children and Young People in Milton Keynes;
- The collaborative approach by the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH);
- The challenges of 3 years ago about thresholds for intervention had improved and were now consistent;
- Prompt service Out of Hours given;
- Positive response by the MK Youth Offending Team (YOT) and Mental Health needs for young people.
- Auditing of shared understanding of good practice across services to be strengthened.
- There was provision of school nurses in Milton Keynes but this needed further resourcing by Health and it was anticipated that this would be considered within the Health and Wellbeing Board;
- Referrals to the MASH team by other services in Milton Keynes does not always include full information, however the Director of Children's Services indicated that an Action Plan was being drafted to help strengthen this;
- There was a range of services available to support Young People but the understanding of these by young people and their carers was not always clear;
- The Director Children's Services was required to respond to OFSTED by 30 March 2020.

Link to Joint Targeted Area Inspection [Milton Keynes Joint Targeted Area Inspection Report Oct 19](#)

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

CP43

VIEW FROM CHILDREN'S HOMES (INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES)

The Panel received a presentation from the Residential Manager of Furze House, The Walnuts and Westminster House who summarised that the biggest change to the service had been the addition of The Walnuts which had been integrated into Milton Keynes Council at the beginning of August 2019. A restructure had followed this to review staffing needs and harmonise the staff structure with the other Council run children's homes.

The Residential Manager indicated that at Westminster House, the appointed Registered Manager was awaiting their interview with Ofsted before this position could be confirmed.

The Panel noted that a group of young people from Westminster House, that included those with high health and mobility needs and those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) had been taken on holiday to Derbyshire during the school summer holidays and this had been very successful. The service hoped to repeat this Activity in the coming year.

The Panel also noted the success that the Service had with a young person who had found the needs of his peers at Westminster House challenging and was able to transition to live alone in a small self-contained flat at Furze House. This supported the decision that had been taken to include Westminster House in the Council's portfolio of children's homes which enabled young people to access other services and facilities.

In response to a question about the ages of the young people using the self-contained accommodation at Furze House, the Residential Manager indicated that it was mainly 16 and 17 year olds but that the service was available until transition.

The Director Children's Services clarified that the service has worked very hard to improve and smooth the transition process with the Council's Adult Social Care Service and to support 18 plus year olds with this.

In response to a question from Councillor M Bradburn about the management and future funding for trips such as the one to Derbyshire, the Residential Manager indicated that trips were a frequent feature of the service's calendar although they were usually more local and that before every trip; consideration of the young

people's needs was paramount. They were investigating the Derbyshire venue again for the coming summer as it was so successful and she anticipated that those who had moved on to the self-contained accommodation at Furze House would be invited.

Resolved:

That the Presentation and questions be noted.

CP44

VIRTUAL SCHOOL PROVISIONAL OUTCOMES

The Panel received a presentation from the Virtual School Head Teacher who summarised that the outcomes and indicated that these were still provisional as the Key Stage 4 results had not yet been received.

The Virtual School Head Teacher also indicated that the cohorts for Young people in Care for the year from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019 were small in comparison with other cohorts.

The Virtual School Head Teacher also indicated that progress of all Looked After Children was closely monitored both by the Virtual School and through Personal Engagement Plans (PEP's) which enabled colleagues to react quickly and offer support were needed.

With regard to GCSE results, the Virtual School Head Teacher advised that just under half of the Looked After Children able to take GCSE's had undertaken these, which was an improvement but there was still a way to go.

With reference to the post 16 age group, who had English as Second language, more activities for that cohort were still required as the group had requested at a previous meeting of the Panel (Minute CP21 of 22 January 2019 refers).

The Virtual School Head Teacher suggested that the academic results did not reflect how well young people were doing in learning practical skills such as plastering, which could result in paid work. She also advised that a Post 16 Officer who worked with the Youth Faculty was progressing this.

The Director Children's Services indicated that Councillor Miles (Chair) attended the Virtual School Governors Panel and had raised at those meetings that the curriculum of options should be widened to include practical as well as academic skills; it was acknowledged that there was more progress to be made with this issue.

In response to a question from a care leaver who had arrived in the UK in 2016 and was now studying mechanical engineering who asked that more focus be put into offering apprenticeships, Interim Head of

Corporate Parenting indicated that, at the Corporate Parenting Event held in October 2019, this had been a key strand of work and consequently, a Breakfast meeting would be held with local businesses to develop the pledges they had made. The Council's Chief Executive, Michael Bracey was also working to widen access to apprenticeships.

In response to a question from a care leaver who asked questions about the age for accessing courses at the Christian Foundation, the Virtual School Head Teacher indicated that she would find out and respond to her after the meeting.

Councillor M Bradburn (Vice Chair) requested that the results practical skills be included in future reports; progress on Apprenticeships be reviewed at a future Corporate Parenting Panel meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the Presentation and questions from the Panel be noted.
2. The Virtual School Head Teacher to investigate access to events being run by the MK Christian Foundation for Care Leavers and advise Care Leavers.
3. That the results for practical skills qualifications be included in future reports.
4. That progress on Apprenticeships be reviewed by the Corporate Parenting Panel by Autumn 2020.

CP45

ADOPTION CONNECTS 6 MONTH REPORT

The Panel received a presentation from the Service Manager, Adoption Connects who highlighted the key points since the previous report of April 2019:

- The service had now been in place for 9 months;
- Adoption Connects have had 35 adoption support assessment requests in six months – currently supporting 82 support plans;
- 25 assessments of prospective adopters in progress;
- 15 approved Prospective Adopters of which 8 have a match progressing to Adoption Panel;
- Part of a National Campaign improve recruitment of prospective adopters; and

- A range of events being supported to recruit new adopters.

In response to a question from Councillor Raja with reference to matching children to families, the Service Manager, Adoption Connects, indicated that it was a complex process to identify the child's needs to match with prospective adopters with reference to age, health and match this. With babies, they were normally fostered first in the anticipation that this would lead to adoption pending court decisions. With older children (aged over 5 years) they tried to keep siblings together where possible, but each case is different.

The Director Children's Services also indicated that the RAA journey has helped match more adopters with children and added that in as many cases as possible, they started as fostering and went on to adoption; and that this approach was supported by the Government to give stability in placements to the children. Also adoption by the wider family members was encouraged to keep a family connection and identity for the child. He explained that Social media had been a challenge for some young people who had different expectations of their natural parents and a family connection helped with this.

The Director Children's Services also indicated that that permanency for children progressing from foster families to adoptive families' was a matter that was being discussed nationally and that he had sight of and signed off each case before it progressed to court to be finalised (Adoption Order).

The Virtual School Head Teacher indicated that they had an officer who worked alongside Adoption Connects which assisted with preventative support for a child starting school and / or transitioning from nursery to infant school. Some schools needed support with teenagers who were trying to find their identity.

Councillor Raja asked how long the Service supported an adopter family and the Service Manager, Adoption Connects, indicated that it was open ended up to age 18 of the child but was also dependant on each family and their relationship the child.

Councillor M Bradburn (Vice Chair) requested that an update on these issues to be brought to the next meeting detailing the different arrangements.

Resolved:

1. That the presentations and questions from the Panel be noted.

2. That an update on the permanency, fostering and adoption be issues to be brought to the next meeting detailing the different arrangements

CP46 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

Councillor M Bradburn (Vice Chair) requested that the Interim Head of Corporate Parenting bring information to the next Chairs' planning meeting and that discussion about the Annual report be deferred.

Resolved:

That discussion about the Annual Report be deferred.

CP47 CORPORATE PARENTING PERFORMANCE TEAM QUARTER 3

The Panel considered The Corporate Parenting Performance Team Quarter 3 was presented by the Interim Head of Corporate Parenting who summarised that:

- Looked after Children (LAC) numbers decreased from 429 to 419 and during the quarter, 42 children became looked after and 36 had left care, however Milton Keynes was still below national figures; which is a positive sign.
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC) entering care has increased again during this period but the rate was slower than in previous quarters. Although Milton Keynes was still below our threshold level of 48 UASC, the number had doubled since the April 2019 figure of 21, with 42 at the end of December 2019.
- The number of 67% of children in foster care had dropped below those of statistical neighbours and the national average of 73%. 52% LAC were in the in-house provision which has continued to decline this year as we increase household reviews and expectations on carers.
- Despite an increase since the last quarter less than 50% of Care Leavers which were in education, training and employment, this is below the national average which was a concern that the Panel members were asked to note.
- There are no unregulated placements for under 18's, which were usually emergency placements, if needed.
- 36 children had been discharged from care, in the quarter.

With regard to stability of placements, the Interim Head of Corporate Parenting clarified that sometimes a few placements for a child wasn't viewed as a negative as some children had very complex

needs and needed to be placed in the right environment. Mother and baby placements were also an issue that impacted on the scorecard. The Service was continuing to work with partners with the Health Service to improve this area.

Councillor V Hopkins asked, with reference to proof of age of asylum seekers, how this was ascertained and the Interim Head of Corporate Parenting advised that Biometric and Fingerprint tests were carried out but not always accepted by the Courts. The Virtual School Head Teacher indicated that UASC were not placed in schools but in colleges if there were any concerns about age.

The Director Children's Services also commented that there was much discussion in the South East region local authorities on the asylum seekers numbers which had increased and was a concern for the service.

Councillor M Bradburn (Vice Chair) indicated that she agreed with the stance that was taken that if in doubt, safeguarding concerns were paramount.

Resolved:

That the Presentations and questions from the Panel be noted.

CP48

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS

Members of the Panel outlined what each of them had done recently to make a difference to the lives of young people in care and care leavers.

Councillor M Bradburn (Vice Chair) indicated that she been supporting an asylum seeker with 60 hours of administration work to support this person in college in Bedford.

CP49

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting by virtue of Paragraph 2 (Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, in order that the Committee may consider the Annex to the following reports:

Edge of Care Strategy

CP50

EDGE OF CARE STRATEGY

Panel considered the presentation from the Group Head of Service, Children and Families who summarised that the Strategy had been launched in January 2016 as a response to emergency situations main points of concern.

The Group Head of Service, Children and Families and the Director Children's Services answered questions from the Panel members with reference to the presentation.

Resolved:

That the Presentation and comments from the Panel be noted.

CP51

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel was scheduled for Tuesday 17 March 2020 at 6.30pm.

AOB

[Link to Top Ten Tips for Social Workers](#)

THE VICE-CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 8.25 PM