



Minutes of the CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL held on TUESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2018 at 6.30 pm

**Present:** Councillor Miles (Chair)  
Councillors M Bradburn (Vice-Chair), Akter, Brown, Brunning, Cannon and Clancy

**Also present:** Councillor Nolan (Cabinet member for Children and Families)

**Officers:** M Heath (Acting Director [Children's Services]), J Rabbitte (Head of Delivery Corporate Parenting), Dr A Vaughan (Consultant Paediatrician [Looked After Children]), M Mellor (Virtual School Head Teacher), C Baines (Named Nurse [Looked After Children's Team]) S Johnson (Specialist Nurse [Children in Care]) and S Muir (Committee Manager)

**Apology:** Councillor V Hopkins (Vice Chair)

**CP09 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

None received.

**CP10 MINUTES**

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 26 June 2018 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

**CP11 OFFICER UPDATE**

(a) Participation and True Triumph

The Head of Delivery, Corporate Parenting, indicated that this year the events had been split in to 3 groups. It was anticipated that by splitting the event by age or ability, this would result in a less formal, better attended event. The younger children or those with disabilities would not be so overwhelmed and be able to engage more successfully in a less formal setting.

The first event was held for children with Special Needs and Disabilities on 31 October 2018 at Oxley Park Community Centre.. Councillor M Bradburn indicated that this was a well-attended event that included Councillors, families and carers.

It evidenced the good, supportive relationships between carers and children.

The Head of Delivery, Corporate Parenting, indicated that the team would follow up those children and carers who hadn't been able to attend and next year invitations will be extended to other children with special needs including children placed out of authority

The next event took place on Friday 15 November 2018 at Safari MK. This was aimed at the Under 14 age group and was very much a family event with foster carers, parents and relatives in attendance. There was an excellent turnout with 72 children the youngest of whom was 5 months old. Awards and medals were presented by the Mayor, the Lead Member, the CEO, the acting DCS and the Head of Delivery for Corporate Parenting. Children cherished their photographs which were provided on the night. There was also an opportunity for family photographs which was very popular.

The third event for the 15-25 year age group was still at the conceptual stage and it was anticipated that this would be more focussed and aspirational and may coincide with Corporate Parenting Week.

(b) Corporate Parenting Week

The Head of Delivery, Corporate Parenting, indicated that a Corporate Parenting Week was being discussed to raise the profile of Corporate Parenting and promote the role and responsibilities to other Councillors and Council service areas. A date of mid-March 2019 was put forward as an option.

The Chair, Councillor Miles, suggested a working group be set up to progress this as there were many areas that could be included.

Acting Director (Children's Services) confirmed that resources to support this would be made available.

(c) Carol Singing

The Head of Delivery, Corporate Parenting announced that the Children in Care Youth Club with the Music Faculty were singing Christmas carols from 4.30 p.m. on 13 December 2018 in the Councillors Lounge area and all were invited.

RESOLVED -

That the update be noted.

## MILTON KEYNES CHILDREN IN CARE ANNUAL HEALTH REPORT 2017/18

The Panel received the Annual Health Report had been produced to provide an overview of the statutory health services provided to Milton Keynes Children in Care from April 2017 to March 2018.

It was reported that the aim of the Annual Health Report was to provide assurance to a number of stakeholders including Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group and Milton Keynes Council that Central and North West London Milton Keynes NHS Trust.

The Consultant Community Paediatrician (Designated Doctor for Children in Care) summarised the main concerns outlined in the report:

(a) Delayed Initial Health Assessments (IHA)

Obtaining consent for IHA's within the 28 day timescale remained the highest factor for delay. The Corporate Parenting Service is working with CNWL to streamline the process and including investing more resources to improve the timescale in gaining consent from parents when a child comes into care.

Another factor was missed appointments for reasons that included illness, visiting Children placed out of Area or requests being declined by other health authorities. There also may be lack of available staff resources and a business case has been submitted to the CCG to increase Nursing Team capacity.

However, in comparison with neighbouring local authorities the percentage of IHA's being achieved on time was positive.

(b) Immunisations

Although Immunisation completion remained high in Milton Keynes there was room for improvement. It was acknowledged that there would always be some young people and parents who refused immunisations such as MMR's to be administered. The Council was investigating whether parental consent can be over ridden based on legal advice.

Another factor was Immunisations of Unaccompanied Young Asylum Seeking children for whom there were no records and therefore took some time to process; these were carried out under Health Protection Agency (HPA) guidelines for 'Incomplete or Unknown Immunisation Status'.

(c) Dental Checks

Although Dental checks statistics in Milton Keynes remained higher than the national average, there were challenges with young people refusing dental appointments despite additional

support. This support included referrals to specialist dental services. It was also anticipated that improvements in capturing data robustly would assist in improving this indicator.

Questions:

- With reference to the impact of the increase of 25% more Children in Care in the past few years, the Acting Director [Children's Services]), indicated that there were challenges with resources when children came into care for short periods of time, as all children coming into care had to have a IHA within 28 days, even if they left care quickly after that.
- With reference to the completion rates of Immunisations, the Consultant Community Paediatrician indicated that these improved the longer children were in care; there was more likelihood of them catching up with Immunisations.
- With reference to obesity rates, the Specialist Nurse indicated that children were assessed individually as some had weight issues that were due to emotional distress. Carers were advised to focus on regular activities rather than diet, as a holistic approach was more effective on a child's well-being.
- With regard to monitoring the assessments of children in care out of area, Nurses were able to travel up to a 2 hour journey to complete these, or the out of area CCG could undertake the assessment. The disadvantage of this was that the other CCG's gave their own Children in Care, priority.

The Head of Delivery, Corporate Parenting, indicated that improvement would be assisted by having the Health Team and the Social Workers working closely together. In particular the quality of Initial Health Assessments would be improved by the SW attending the IHA so that they can share information about the child's background.

The service was getting 'back to basics' to ensure each health professional had a good understanding of the objectives and principles behind the requirement to have IHA's and Review Health Assessments in the prescribed timescales. It was noted that investing in good services when Children in Care were younger would ensure that the impact on Adult Health Services was reduced and fewer Care Leavers will transition to Adult Health Services.

Councillor Miles, Chair, requested that in future reports, the Executive Summary highlighted the points of concern.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Children in Care Annual Health Report be noted.
2. That the Executive Summaries of future reports highlight the points of concern.

**MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL ADOPTION AGENCY ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18**

The Panel considered the Adoption Agency Annual Report Officers Annual Report 2017-18 which was introduced by the Head of Delivery, Corporate Parenting.

It was reported that a detailed analysis of the Milton Keynes Adoption Service in relation to children's and adopters adoption journeys between 1 April 2016 and 31st March 2017 in line with the National Minimum Standards and Statutory Guidance was included. The report also included information about post adoption support, non-agency adoptions; inter country adoptions, work with birthparents and adoptive parents and the work of the Fostering and Adoption Panel.

The Head of Delivery (Corporate Parenting) summarised the progress of the establishment of a regional adoption agency which aligned Milton Keynes and Bedford Borough. The new service is a strategic partnership between the parties to amalgamate their adoption services into a single integrated service. It was planned to launch the Regional Adoption Agency on 1 April 2019.

Head of Delivery Corporate Parenting indicated that Milton Keynes had been very successful in increasing the number of adoption orders granted for Children in Care. The setting up of the Regional Adoption Agency was timely as widened the catchment area of potential adopters and supported the Council to achieve its target of a minimum of 21 Adoption orders per annum.

The Acting Director (Children's Services) indicated that other contributory factors to reaching the targets included teenagers being supported by friends and family. However, it was noted that more babies were being brought into care which created other challenges. This reflected the national pattern and there was evidence of some of these babies being the children of Care Leavers. Now that the Council was part of the Central East Regional Adoption Agency, it would be possible to monitor the adoption data across all participating authorities.

In response to a question about Adoption being part of a care plan being called in to question by the Courts, the Head of Delivery (Corporate Parenting) clarified that in some cases, adoption was a positive care plan. When there was no Adopter available from the Council's Adoption Agency, the Council would enter into an inter-agency agreement with a Voluntary Adoption Agency or with other Local Authorities to find a prospective adopter family and ensure that there was no delay for individual children.

In response to a question about single children or family groups being adopted together, Head of Delivery Corporate Parenting explained that wherever possible, young people were adopted in family groups following sibling assessments. However, opportunities

were limited by a shortage in Adopters who could take a sibling group. She added that Milton Keynes had been quite successful with family groups being adopted together, however if the young people were placed separately, they would have a post adoption contact adoption plan to maintain links with siblings and other family members.

She also indicated that Social Media had changed the face of closed adoptions and assisted in close contact between siblings adopted separately, which helped them to preserve their identities and relationships.

The Panel heard that there had been a challenge to the Service historically, with post adoption support for young people who had difficulty in dealing with the circumstances of their adoption. However there was a lot of work being carried out with birth parents, grandparents and a thriving MK Youth Group, to support those families with challenges.

In response to questions about how many out of the Children in Care were able to be adopted and how many were not able to be placed, Head of Delivery Corporate Parenting, clarified that currently they had 40 Children in Care on a Plan of Adoption at various stages of completion and 20 being placed.

Head of Delivery Corporate Parenting also summarised that Adoption wasn't necessarily the right plan for all Children in Care as some, for example, Unaccompanied Young Asylum Seekers, may be in Care permanently. The numbers of Children weren't increasing although there was movement in and out of Care, and the age group of those coming into Care was reducing and was currently averaged at 8 years of age.

RESOLVED -

That the report and actions being taken be noted.

**CP14**

**MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18**

The Panel considered the Council's Fostering Service Annual Report 2017-18 which was introduced by the Head of Delivery, Corporate Parenting.

The Head of Delivery Corporate Parenting, summarised that the report was linked to the Council's sufficiency duty under S22(g) of the Children Act (1989) and statutory guidance on 'Sufficiency' issued in 2010. Overall, the picture in Milton Keynes with regard to placements for children in care and care leavers was of a good and improving performance. The numbers of children who were Looked After had remained below national rates, despite an increasing local child population.

The Head of Delivery Corporate Parenting also stated that in future the Fostering Report would be provided on a six month basis.

The Head of Delivery, Corporate Parenting also indicated that the percentage of Children in Care in in-house fostering, as compared to those being fostered by Independent Fostering Agencies, was increasing and the number of Children in Care placed in kinship foster care (with family and friends) was also increasing, which was positive news.

The Head of Delivery, Corporate Parenting also clarified that the area of weaknesses identified in the 2016-17 annual report about household reviews was now being rectified with additional resources having been sourced.

RESOLVED -

1. That the report including the actions being taken be noted.
2. That in future the Fostering Report would be provided on a six month basis.

**CP15**

### **MILTON KEYNES VIRTUAL SCHOOL PROVISIONAL RESULTS**

The Virtual School Head Teacher presented the provisional results for Children in Care at the Virtual School for 2017-18 and summarised that the Virtual School knew every child in terms of attainment and development and were able to monitor any changes very quickly. She also indicated that:

- Personal Education plans (PEP's) were carried out from the age of 2 years and a virtual school team member or social worker was present when the plans were written and would help schools with ideas to improve;
- Key Stage I writing has been a focus although the number of children within this cohort was small at 3. Key Stage II results had remained the same and the team were encouraged that children were going into senior schools with the ability to attain. The figure was an improvement to 32% from 2 years ago for "Expected Standard of Reading, Writing and Maths when it was 11%;
- GCSE Results, one young person had achieved an A\* in Arabic (first language). A cohort of 28 had entered and managed the new GCSE format well. Many achieved good results in science subjects which were not reported; and
- With reference those Children in Care Not in Education or Training (NEET), the Council had robust systems in place to place Looked After Children but it was more challenging when the Looked After Child was placed out of area as they didn't get priority in other areas.

Additionally the team have a strong relationship with the Youth Faculty and meet regularly to monitor those who were NEET. Other Pathways are being developed and all staff

knew the details of each Child in Care Not in Education or Training.

Questions:

- (a) With reference to how Milton Keynes Secondary Schools were working with Children in Care, and if the Virtual School placed Children in Care in schools who had used exclusions, the Virtual School Head Teacher confirmed that they were working well.

She added that although there were some anomalies, this area had improved in the last year and there had been no permanent exclusions although 2 schools used the term "temporary exclusion". The Corporate Parenting team were very careful about which school they placed a Child in Care in; although in some cases there were particular reasons why they were placed in a particular school. As a result some children may be in inadequate schools, but these were being monitored

- (b) With reference to school exclusions, if pastoral care was still offered in schools to support those Looked After Children who were excluded and also stated that in her opinion, a fixed term exclusion was a harsh alternative, the Virtual School Head Teacher responded that all designated teachers were part of the pastoral Team and that alternative options to exclusion should be sought, as exclusion was another form of rejection, for those in care.

- (c) Councillor Brown asked with reference to school exclusions, if these were mainly in secondary schools and the Virtual School Head Teacher responded that they mainly were but for one or two days,. However, if the child was excluded for one day, they were usually sent home.

- (d) With reference to the predictions was for 2019 for those Not in Education or training; the Virtual School Head Teacher responded that the figure should reduce as they were aware of every Child in Care's circumstances and could offer individual support. There were currently 3 Children In Care in Year 12 who would not be going on to College who they were discussing trainee ships and apprenticeships with.

The Acting Director (Children's Services) explained that by profiling each Child in Care, the Corporate Parenting Panel each could be supported from an earlier stage.

RESOLVED -

That the provisional results be noted.



**CP16**

**DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Head of Delivery, Corporate Parenting summarised that following various changes in legislation, the Corporate Parenting Panel Terms of Reference were required to be amended and brought up to date.

Councillor Miles indicated that input from other service areas and Councillors would be required and proposed that a Working group be established to report back to the 22 January 2019 meeting. The Panel Members were asked to propose members for this that would include the Chair and Vice Chairs.

RESOLVED -

That a working group be formed to report back to the 22 January 2019 meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 8.10 PM