

Minutes of the CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL held on TUESDAY
15 NOVEMBER 2016 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillor Miles (Chair)
Councillors Betteley, Cannon, Clancy, Crooks, Green, V Hopkins and Nolan

Officers: N Rayner (Service Director [Children and Families]), J Hooper (Head of Safeguarding), K Lockwood (Head of Corporate Parenting), M Mellor (Virtual School Head-Teacher), J Roberts (Independent Reviewing Officer), D Williams (National Graduate Scheme Trainee) and S Muir (Committee Manager).

Apology: Councillor Green

CP17 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

None received.

CP18 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 20 September 2015 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

It was noted that young people found the format of the Minutes of the Panel's meetings to be too formal. The Chair clarified that they were required to be in this format as they were an official Council record, however he suggested that a copy could be re-written for young people in a more acceptable format and asked Members of the Panel to volunteer for this task.

The Panel also noted that at Minute CP12 Children and Young People's Participation Children in Care Council - Our Voice, it had been agreed that the Panel considered ways in which it could more actively engage with the young people in the Council's care. Accordingly involvement of young people had been scheduled for this meeting, however the young people had advised that they were not fully prepared and would prefer to attend the January meeting of the Panel.

The Panel also requested that a different environment be used for the January meeting.

Councillor Nolan requested that a copy of the Outcomes and Minutes relating to CP11 "Independent reviewing Officers Annual Report 2015/16" be circulated to Panel Members.

Councillor V Hopkins gave an update of her attendance at the Milton Keynes Safeguarding Board Annual Conference, at which the

keynote speaker, a care leaver from another Local Authority, had given an excellent presentation which had raised interesting points.

CP19

MK FOSTERING 2020

The Panel considered the presentation from Dominic Williams (National Graduate Scheme Trainee) 2015/16 with reference to the Fostering 2020 work, with a vision substantially to increase the number and range of MKC foster carers by 2020 and end new placements with independent fostering agency carers.

The National Graduate Scheme Trainee explained that he was at the first stage of a four stage project, and this scoping stage included:

- engagement with foster carers/LAC/ care leavers
- possible media creation and advertising package options
- review of recruiting foster carers best practice nationally
- work in the community to spread message to recruit foster carers and raise awareness
- increasing the Council's online presence

The National Graduate Scheme Trainee also indicated that he was trying to raise awareness of the opportunities for residents to become Foster Carers and to widen this to residents who thought that only traditional two parent families could apply.

The Panel members made a number of suggestions to increase awareness of Fostering opportunities that included:

- Letters from schools to parents that could be targeted at older children age groups.
- Dispelling the myth that only "a certain kind of person" could be a foster carer.
- Contacting large employers in Milton Keynes e.g. Network rail, Santander, Homebase and Open University and offering to make presentations or training events to employees.
- Current foster children making presentations from their view of "what makes a Foster Carer", to Community and Sports Organisations.
- Councillors include at the bottom of their emails a link advertising Foster Carers.
- Leaflets for waiting areas in schools, hospitals G P Surgeries, Parish and Town Council Offices and Estate Agents
- Include a presentation with other events e.g. MK Jobs Shows, MK50 Celebrations

The Chair suggested that any further ideas to be emailed direct to the National Graduate Scheme Trainee.

The Service Director (Children and Families) indicated that from previous experience “word of mouth” had worked well to raise awareness of fostering opportunities and also that those from a wide variety of groups including those with other languages and families with older children and experience of parenting were especially sought as the needs of the possible foster children were quite diverse. She added that there was a large range support and advice from the Council’s Children and Families Service for those who were considering becoming foster carers.

The Service Director also indicated that families based locally in Milton Keynes were being targeted in order that they and the children had easy access to Milton Keynes based support and events. The only time foster families out of area were considered to be preferable to local carers was when they were a relative of a child or had moved out of area after fostering a child or when the child had an identified need to be placed outside Milton Keynes (e.g. to ensure their safety).

Head of Corporate Parenting indicated that packs for prospective Foster Carers were available and were usually hand delivered by experienced workers in order that questions could be answered efficiently. She also indicated that the availability of a wide variety of prospective foster parents helped with appropriate selection and placements in matching with young people.

RESOLVED -

1. That the presentation be received and officer colleagues be thanks for their work.
2. Suggestions to increase awareness of Fostering opportunities be sent direct Dominic.Williams@milton-keynes.gov.uk.

CP20

VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT 2016

The Virtual School Head Teacher presented the annual report of the Virtual School for 2016 and the School Improvement Plan 2016/17.

It was reported that at September 2016 Milton Keynes had 373 children and young people in care of which 350 were aged between 3 and 18 years. The Virtual School Head Teacher clarified that the Virtual School supported the education of children in care who were enrolled at schools and remained their schools’ responsibility.

The Virtual School Head Teacher explained that since the appointment of Welfare Call to collect data from schools recording the progress of Virtual School pupils, which was now its second year, they were building up patterns which informed where resources should be targeted to enable further improvements. She also clarified that statistically insignificant numbers were also analysed to give an accurate picture.

The Virtual School Head Teacher also explained that her team now included, in addition to herself, a Senior Education Officer, two Personal Education Plan (PEP) Quality and Compliance Officers, an Early Years Officer to support preschool settings and an Independent Advice and Guidance Officer (IAG). The IAG Officer commissioned from the Council's IAG team supported young people in year 11 and also offered advice to and guidance to Care Leavers. These appointments enabled the Virtual School Head Teacher to work more closely with young people and their schools, including maintaining a particular focus on those who had been excluded from school for any reason.

In response to questions from Panel members, the Virtual School Head Teacher clarified that:

- That between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016, data driven projects and SIP targets had identified that a few of the reporting cohort seemed to be struggling with Maths as the age 11 expectation had not been met therefore these children would be offered support in Year 7 Maths;
- "Nimble" Tablets were used for Key Stage 2-4 for Reading Writing and Maths and were being rolled out through the Personal Education Plans (PEP's);
- The Milton Keynes attainment data for the GCSE results for Looked After Children was above the national and Ofsted targets;
- "Aiming Higher" as a longer term aim for Looked After Children to be encouraged to consider University and Further Education;
- The monitoring of attendance and exclusion of Looked After Children at school was robust, any anomalies could always be quickly explained and measurement of this priority could be included in future and;
- School Governors be invited to Safeguarding training.

The Panel discussed the presentation in depth and noted the new priorities for 2016-2017.

RESOLVED -

1. That the presentation and School Improvement Plan 2016-17 be noted.
2. That the new priorities for 2016-2017 be noted.

CP21

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN - CHRISTMAS EVENT

The Head of Safeguarding summarised that the Christmas Event that Looked After Children were planning for Tuesday 20 December included three sessions throughout the day to allow Panel members to attend and take part in activities at their most convenient time:

10.30 - 11.30am.

11.30 - 12.30am

12.30 - 1.30pm

The Head of Safeguarding clarified that if Panel members were unable to attend any of the hourly sessions above, the best time to attend would be for the Shared Lunch at 1.30 - 3.30pm. This would give Panel members the opportunity to speak to the young people in a more relaxed setting and to consider ideas for a "Promise to Looked after Children" from the Panel.

The Head of Safeguarding also advised that the invitation would be sent again to Panel Members.

RESOLVED -

Those Committee members noted the invitation to the Looked After Children Christmas Event on 20 December 2016.

CP22

REGULATION 44 REPORT AND FEEDBACK FROM COUNCILLOR VISITS

The Panel noted that Regulation 44 visits had been made to the Council's children's homes during September and October 2016.

Head of Safeguarding explained that the Regulation 44 Reports were compiled by the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) which was a UK charity providing information, advice, advocacy and legal representation to children, young people and vulnerable adults.

She asked Councillors for their feedback about the new style of reporting and the comments received were positive although they Panel had concerns about client confidentiality of some of the information that was included.

The Chair requested that the NYAS Visitor be asked to attend a future meeting of the Panel and this could be included in the work programme.

RESOLVED -

1. That details of the visits be noted.
2. That the NYAS Visitor be invited to a future meeting of the Panel.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING 8.05 PM