

Minutes of the meeting of the CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL held on MONDAY 13 JANUARY 2014 at 9.30 am

Present: Councillor Miles (Chair)
Councillors Bradburn, Brock, O'Neill, Small and Zealley

Officers: N Rayner (Assistant Director [Children's Social Care]), S Thirlway (Assistant Director [Integrated Support and Social Care]), G Reiter (Head of Delivery - Corporate Parenting), M May (Head of Delivery - Children's Social Work) and S Muir (Committee Manager).

Also Present: Councillor Dransfield (Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Life Long Learning)

CP30 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 11 November 2013 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record with the following amendment:

CP 22 REGULATION 33 VISITS – JUNE TO AUGUST 2013.

Para 3 "following the OFSTED Inspection at **the Walnuts** in June 2013".

CP31 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

None

CP32 CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL; TODAY'S CHILDREN TOMORROW'S FUTURE

The Panel received the report of the Children In Care Council: Today's Children Tomorrow's Future (TCTF) from the Head of Delivery Corporate Parenting and commented that it was a good factual report with good reference points.

The Panel noted that several events had taken place and were generally well attended with the exception of the "Housing Consultation for Care Leavers" when no care leavers had attended. It was suggested that the session be run again with better promotion to ensure that the views of care leavers were represented in the consultation. The Panel noted that discussions were ongoing about strategies to address attendance at events.

The Panel also noted that a School Children in Care Council had been set up successfully by one TCTF member in their school and that all children in care who attended that school had been invited.

The Panel also noted that it had not been possible for Children in Care to attend a Corporate Parenting Panel meeting as part of the "National Take Over Day" in October 2013 due to other commitments and asked officers to investigate either incorporating a Corporate Parenting Panel meeting with a Today's Children Tomorrow Future (TCTF) meeting which would be more convenient for the young people, or hold an evening Corporate Parenting Panel to allow the young people and the Youth Cabinet to attend.

The Panel also noted that a proposal for a weekly Children in Care youth group had been made and that it was anticipated that a pilot project would commence in the near future. Panel members noted that details of the dates and times of this would be included in the next report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. Officers to arrange a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel at a time when young people are able to attend.
3. Officers investigate and identify ways to ensure that more Looked After Children and Care Leavers participate in Today's Children Tomorrow's Future meetings and events.

CP33

**REGULATION 33 AND MEMBER'S VISITS SUMMARY REPORTS
(SEPTEMBER TO NOVEMBER 2013)**

The Panel received Regulation 33 Visits report for September to November 2013 August 2013 and noted that visits to Furze House and Westminster Drive had been carried out during the period, however they were awaiting clarification about the continuation of the Walnuts as a residential centre.

The Panel noted that although they liked to meet with carers and parents, this was not always convenient due to the timings of the Member visits. Also, because young people were on respite visits, by the nature of these, parents or carers would not visit. However, there were opportunities for parents or carers to meet with Members during the surgery sessions if they so wished. The Panel indicated that the number of visits had reduced in anticipation of the new surgery style arrangements and requested that the surgery times be circulated together with officer briefing details about the future plans for the Walnuts and the parents and carers understanding of the Members role as Corporate Parents and the reasons for Member visits.

The Panel noted the improving quality of the Residential Services that contributed to good outcomes for Milton Keynes Children in Care and that this corresponded with the Council's Integrated Supported and Social Care Service Group Plan 2013/14.

Panel Members also noted that the use of listening devices which were used to alert staff to possible emergencies was being reviewed to ensure that the privacy of young people was not compromised.

Panel members also noted that following the Ofsted announcement in November 2013 to discontinue individual inspections of local authority adoption and fostering services and replace these with inspections of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, details of the consultation which runs to 21 February 2014 were at:

[HTTP://WWW.OFSTED.GOV.UK/RESOURCES/INSPECTION-OF-CHILDRENS-HOMES-CONSULTATION-DOCUMENT-2013](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/inspection-of-childrens-homes-consultation-document-2013)

Members were invited to send any comments to the Assistant Director Children's Social Care in order that they can be included in the Council's response to the consultation. It was anticipated that the new framework would come into effect from April 2014.

The Panel also heard from the Cabinet member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning

RESOLVED:

1. Officer briefings about the future plans for the Walnuts and about the parents or carers understanding of the Members role as Corporate Parents be arranged.
2. Surgery Visit times be circulated to Panel members
3. That a briefing detailing the plans for The Walnuts be circulated.
3. That the report be noted.

CP34

MILTON KEYNES SERVICE FOR CARE LEAVERS REPORT

The Panel received the report detailing the activities and summary of the work being delivered within the Leaving Care function of the Corporate Parenting Team that was to be included in the next Ofsted inspection of Services for Care Leavers.

The Panel noted that young people leaving care were supported by a Deputy Team Manager, 7 Social Work Assistants (Personal Advisors) and a Business Support Worker together with a Connexions Advisor who is allocated 2 days per week to work with care leavers.

The Panel also noted that young people received advice on a range of issues that included Revenues and Benefits and Housing and that applications for Social Housing were completed for all young people in care at the age of 16. The care leavers in independent accommodation were also supplied with a health and safety pack and officers were asked to confirm who was responsible for the payment of these.

The Panel indicated concerns about future Connexions and Job Centre Plus support for care leavers and the impact of proposed housing benefit reductions and asked that officers provide a briefing on these issues when more details were available.

The Panel noted that performance indicator NI 148 that measured the percentage of Care Leavers in Education or Employment on their 19th birthday advised that the figure for Q3 was about 60% and for Q4

would be 72% which would exceed the set performance indicator local target of 68%.

The Panel also noted that currently 8 young people who had left care were being supported through University through the council's Transition to Adulthood (Leaving Care) Financial Policy 2013-14 and that the frequency, amounts of each payment and method of payment was set out in the young person's Pathway Plan detailed in that policy. However, performance monitoring of the Pathway Plans had recently been affected by temporary staffing issues and the Panel requested that this be resolved as quickly as possible.

The Panel congratulated one young person who had been supported by Council funding to gain an engineering degree and was now undertaking a PhD funded by external sponsorship. The Panel indicated that this young person be asked if he/she would act as a mentor to others.

The Panel also heard from the Cabinet member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That a briefing be arranged detailing future support from Connexions and Job Centre Plus and the impact of Housing Benefit reductions on Care Leavers.
 - (b) That Members be advised of who pays for Health and Safety packs for care leavers in independent accommodation.
 - (c) That the report be noted.
- (Councillor Small left the meeting at this point and did not return).

CP35

IMPROVING PLACEMENT STABILITY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE UPDATE

The Panel received the report summarising the key findings from the Department of Education's Data Pack Improving Permanence for Children in Care and noted that improving placement stability and permanence contributed to the Milton Keynes Children in Care Performance Indicators:

- (a) The percentage of children looked after at 31 March with three or more placements during the preceding year.
- (b) The percentage of children under 16, who had been looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years at 31st March and were living in the same foster placement for at least 2 years.

It was reported that a significant number of children in care experienced too many placements which impacted on the child developing multiple problems, becoming more challenging and needing higher cost placements. Also the reason for a child entering care could impact substantially on placement stability as those who had experienced abuse or neglect required skilled, knowledgeable and well supported carers.

The Panel noted that the service needed to ensure that there were sufficient secure and appropriate placements available to meet the diverse needs of all the children and young people in the Council's care and that currently there was an insufficient number of these however this was being taken forward with the Youth Offending Team.

The Panel indicated that it was preferable for young people to be in foster care rather than residential care and that the payment scales of foster carers for those young people with more challenging needs should be made more attractive.

The Panel also indicated that good quality assessments and training for foster carers was required and requested details of the training currently available for foster carers. The Panel also noted that potential issues with placements were included at the interview stage with foster carers and requested that that lessons learned from the analyses of placement breakdowns already supplied to the Fostering Panel, be brought to the next Corporate Parenting Panel.

The Panel also heard from the Cabinet member for Children's' Services and Lifelong Learning.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that details of training for fosters carers be circulated to panel members;
- (b) that payment scales for Foster Carers be reviewed; and
- (c) that the report be noted.

CP36

ADOPTION HIGHLIGHT REPORT

The Panel noted that Adoption Highlight report that had been requested at the meeting of the Panel on the 11 November 2013

The Assistant Director, Children's Social Care highlighted that the trend was showing an improvement on previous years' when the number of adopters was low. The recruitment target for adopters for the current year was doubled from previous years and it was anticipated that this would be achieved.

The Assistant Director, Children's Social Care advised that numbers of adopters across the UK had increased as the result of various national campaigns to recruit adopters and the numbers recruited was split between Local Authority and voluntary organisations.

Other reasons for the increase in numbers included those who wanted to adopt more children and increased contact between adopters and those who were interested in adopting.

The Assistant Director, Children's Social Care also advised that the number of failed adoptions was low: there had only been one case of an adoption breakdown prior to the Adoption Order being made and another case where the prospective adopters changed their mind. She

added that adoptions were less likely to work with older children who had a troubled history.

The Panel also heard from the Cabinet member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning.

RESOLVED:

That the report be approved.

CP37

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Panel noted that the next meeting of the Panel would be held on Monday 7 April 2014 at 09.30.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 11.50 AM

DRAFT