



Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2012 - 2013

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MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL: INTEGRATED SUPPORT AND SOCIAL CARE

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL - ANNUAL REPORT (2012/13)

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 This is the Annual Report of the activities of the Corporate Parenting Panel, which is presented to the Children and Young People's Select Committee.
- 1.2 This Annual report covers the period from January 2012 to the end of March 2013. Future Annual reports will be produced to cover the fiscal year (1st April to 31st March) in line with all other Annual Reports produced.
- 1.3 This report provides the Committee with the opportunity to review the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel in 2012/13.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the Annual Report.
- 2.2 That the Committee recommends any further areas which they feel should be considered by the Corporate Parenting Panel in 2013/14.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel was first established on an equal political party basis in 2003.
- 3.2 The Children and Young Persons Act 2008, which was fully implemented in April 2011, underpins the key role of 'corporate parenting' in shaping services to children in care. The Local Authority has a responsibility as a 'Corporate Parent' for all children in the care of Milton Keynes Council (sometimes referred to as Looked after Children (LAC)). 'Corporate parenting' emphasises the collective responsibility of the Council and its members to ensure good parenting and good outcomes for all children in their care.
- 3.3 The Children and Families Bill 2013 is scheduled to receive Royal Assent in autumn 2013. The Bill seeks further to reform legislation, including areas in relation to:
 - adoption and children in care
 - aspects of the family justice system
 - children and young people with special educational needs
 - the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England
 - statutory rights to leave and pay for parents and adopters

- 3.4 Milton Keynes Council aims to ensure that all children in its care experience excellent parenting: nurturing, supportive and ambitious care which provides stability promotes resilience and respects children and young people's cultural heritages.

4. Milton Keynes' Children in Care

- 4.1 The number of children in Milton Keynes' care has increased from 278 in March 2012 to 282 in March 2013. Milton Keynes has a growing population of under-18s. There has been a slight decrease in the Milton Keynes' rate of children in care per 10,000 children.

This rate remains below the national and “statistical neighbour” comparator average rates (comparative data is currently only available for the year 2011/12).

	England 31.3.12	Statistical neighbour 31.3.12	MK 31.03.12	MK 31.03.13.
Number of children looked after per 10,000 under 18 population	59	62	47.8	47.3

- 4.2 On 31st March 2013, of those 282 children in Milton Keynes’ care:
- 213 (76%) were in foster care placements (160 with MKC foster carers);
 - 20 (7%) were in adoptive placements awaiting an adoption order;
 - 24 (8%) were in residential provision (including 5 in MKC provision at Westminster House);
 - 12 (4%) were at home with parents;
 - 6 (2%) were in various independent living arrangements;
 - 3 (1%) were in a residential family centre or special school;
 - 3 (1%) were in a Young Offenders Institute;
 - 1 was in a health secure environment.
- 4.3 The legal status of those 282 children included:
- 214 (76%) children and young people in compulsory care arrangements ordered by the family courts (mainly interim or full care orders)
 - 67 (24%) in voluntary care and 1 temporarily remanded until criminal trial.
- 4.4 The ethnicity of those 282 children included:
- 225 (80%) of white British, white Irish or other white background. The 2012 Milton Keynes school census identified 70% of children in MK schools with this ethnicity.
 - 21 (7%) of white/black Caribbean, white/black African, white Asian or other mixed background. Schools: 6%
 - 17 (6%) of black Caribbean, African or other black background. Schools: 11%
 - 11 (4%) of Asian background. Schools: 9%
 - 8 (3%) from another ethnic group.
- 4.5 Of those 282 children:
- 13 (5%) were young asylum seekers
 - 126 (45%) were female
 - 156 (55%) were male
 - 67 (24%) were aged 0-4
 - 58 (21%) were aged 5-9
 - 99 (35%) were aged 10-15
 - 58 (21%) were aged 16 or over
- 4.6 The council applied for 65 interim care orders (the start of care proceedings for children suffering neglect or abuse) in 2012/13, compared with 49 such applications in 2011/12. 20 children in Milton Keynes’ care were adopted in 2012/13, compared to 13 in 2011/12.

5. Review of Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) Meetings

- 5.1 The Panel met on 6 occasions. Following the Safeguarding and Looked After Children Ofsted inspection in July 2012, the panel reviewed its scope, responsibilities and ways

of working to further develop its impact and effectiveness and ensure enhance its links with other agencies to improve outcomes for Children in Care (CiC). This development work has included:

- the monitoring and development of the CiC strategy
- receiving reports generated by improved local systems for reporting outcomes for CiC
- providing a robust virtual 'governing body' for the MK virtual school,
- further enhancing elected Members' understanding of the needs of CiC and their corporate parenting responsibilities, and strengthening the visibility of elected Members as champions for CiC,
- improving the panel's understanding and oversight of arrangements for young people in care placements outside Milton Keynes
- developing working arrangements with Officers to ensure that the necessary resources are in place to deliver improved outcomes for CiC
- further improving CPP members' levels of engagement with CiC.

5.2 Councillor Norman Miles has continued as Chair of the Panel. Councillor Gerald Small was elected as Vice Chair. All members have been CRB checked and trained to undertake member visits to Children's Homes and to work with the borough's Children in Care Council. All have undertaken and reported on visits to the borough's Children's homes.

5.3 The Panel considered a number of reports and service areas, including:

- The Educational attainment of Children in Care (CiC) – comparative data with other LAs
- The Virtual School's progress report
- Children in Care Pregnancy and Sexual Health
- The National Charter for Care Leavers –adopted by Milton Keynes for our care leavers
- Annual Reports in relation to Corporate Parenting Panel, children in care, adoption services, fostering services, residential care, the Independent Reviewing Service, Milton Keynes Community Health service for CiC and the CiC annual health report;
- Ofsted inspection reports for Safeguarding and Looked after Children, Adoption and Fostering Services, residential units and related improvement plans;
- The Adoption action plan and Adoption score card;
- Commissioning plan for sufficiency for children in care 2011-2013;
- Performance indicators 2011/12 and LA data on LAC, including Milton Keynes' performance;
- CiC strategy review report and the developing CiC strategy for 2013-2016;
- Regulation 33 visiting;
- Today's children, Tomorrow's Future (TCTF) reports;

5.4 Panel Members meet quarterly with the children in care council, which is called 'Today's Children, Tomorrow's Future' (TCTF) and have ensured that issues raised by

TCTF are acted on by officers. There is also an annual 'get to know you' event for elected Members and TCTF.

5.5 The young people set the agenda for TCTF meetings with CPP Members.

The following issues were raised by the young people, considered and agreed:

- To review and update practice in relation to child care reviews to ensure that they are more child centred and take place in venues where young people feel most comfortable. This includes enabling and providing increased opportunities for young people to chair their own child care reviews. A meeting between young people, supported by a participation worker, and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) took place in July 2012 to consider the views of the young people and ensure that improved practice to address all these issues was put in place. Young people, with the support of the Participation Worker, are developing guidance for young people about chairing their own child care reviews. Training and support will be provided to young people to support this;
- Young people, supported by the participation worker, are developing a 'young people's guide' to the leaving care financial policy;
- In March 2012, young people suggested developing a 'care leavers' pledge for consideration. They later chose to adopt the national Care Leavers Charter, launched in October 2012, which has now been adopted by Milton Keynes Council. The young people plan to meet after the 2013 Summer exam period to review and apply the charter in Milton Keynes;
- To explore ways of improving the method of communication and speed of response between young people, social workers and independent reviewing officers;
- To improve communication with all young people in care to ensure they know of developments in practice and services in a timely manner as well as knowing what they are entitled to and their rights;
- To support young people in developing 'young people's guides' to key strategy and policy documents where necessary;
- To ensure that all elected Members are more aware of TCTF, of young people's experiences of care and of other areas of work which impact upon children in care and care leavers. To support this, it was agreed that the Lead Member for Children's Services and Members of Parliament for Milton Keynes would be invited to the annual 'getting to know you' TCTF event;
- An elected member from the CPP, accompanied by an officer, joined two of our young people in a national 'corporate parenting' event in Birmingham in March 2012 where ideas to improve lives for CiC were highlighted;
- MK to continue to participate in the Local Government Association (LGA) annual national corporate parenting week in the summer and, where appropriate and possible, to highlight corporate parenting experiences and achievements in the LGA corporate parenting publication;
- To develop training for elected Members in relation to corporate parenting. Young people agreed to participate in developing training for Corporate Parenting Panel members and other elected members;

- Young people requested opportunities for mentoring/ shadowing Elected Members and/or MKC Officers in their work. The young people felt this would be a good opportunity for them to get to know more about the roles and responsibilities of elected members and officers in addition to offering our young people opportunities to know more about employment/career options available to them;
- Young people would like MKC to provide work experience/ apprentice opportunities to children in care and care leavers to help with their opportunities for employment. This is being explored as part of wider council work to develop employment opportunities for Milton Keynes' young people;
- To consider what further supports, if any, can be made available to young people making the transition from school to college/university or work;
- At the request of young people, we developed and introduced groups for children in care aged 14+ to offer opportunities to learn life skills, develop cooking skills, manage budgets, learn DIY/decorating skills, look at how to stay healthy and offer employment/career planning;
- To ensure that all social workers, managers and IROs ensure that the policy in relation to passport availability for children in care is adhered to, and to ensure that where there are legitimate reasons for delays in obtaining passports, social workers ensure that the young people are kept informed about these;
- TCTF members organised (with support from the participation worker) a 'party' for children in care to allow other young people to learn more about TCTF and the opportunities and benefits of participation in TCTF. The young people invited elected members, senior managers, foster carers and IROs to this event, held on December 1st 2012. This successful event raised awareness of TCTF with our young people and more have come forward to participate in TCTF ;

5.6 Panel Members have undertaken quarterly visits to the Council's three children's homes and have made recommendations for improvement as appropriate. Panel Members have produced member guidance for future Councillors in relation to such visits.

6. **Future Work Programme**

6.1 The Panel will continue its work on those standing items included in their terms of reference.

6.2 The current CPP work plan for 2013/14 includes:

- the finalisation and implementation of the updated Milton Keynes children in care strategy for 2013/16;
- a focus upon the stability and the educational attainment of children in care, and services to care leavers;
- receiving reports on the quality and sufficiency of residential and fostering placements, with a particular focus upon placement location (within or outside Milton Keynes);
- monitoring the on-going delivery of the Pledge - CPP will continue to work with young people, both those living in MK and those out of area, to deliver a clear and effective pledge that does what it says and achieves real improvements to the lives of our children in care;

- monitoring the implementation and impact of changes in regulations and guidance;
- monitoring adherence to the charters for children in care and care leavers which the council has adopted;
- quarterly meetings with TCTF young people and participation in other TCTF events and opportunities;
- considering priority service areas, such as the council's progress in delivering further improvements in its adoption performance and the impact of the one-off 2013/14 adoption reform grant.

Background papers

Minutes of Corporate Parenting Panel – 2011/12 and 2012/13 and CPP – Terms of Reference

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