At a meeting of Corporate Parenting Panel held at The Rufus Centre, Steppingley Road, Flitwick, Bedford, MK45 1TH on 23 July 2019 from 2pm – 4.40pm

Present:

**Elected Members (voting)**
- Cllrs A Dodwell (Chair)
- S Clark (Vice-Chair)
- S Collins
- S Goodchild
- C Hegley
- G Mackey
- G Sanders
- T Stock

**Officers (voting)**
- Mr T Hoyle, Assistant Director of Strategic Commissioning
  Social Care, Health and Housing

**Carers (non voting)**
- Mr P Albon
- Mr L Youngman

**Children in Care Council Representatives (Co-Chair) (non-voting)**

**Officers in Attendance**
- Mrs J Bunker-Dare, Head of Virtual School
- Mrs R Coals, Principle Social Worker & Head of Professional Svcs
- Ms K Crawford, Senior Performance Analyst
- Mrs J Edwards, Head of Service (Inclusion)
- Ms S Griffin, Committee Services Officer
- Mrs S Keenan, Practice Manager, Conferencing and Review
  Professional Standards
- Mrs K Mathu, Participation Officer – Voice, Involvement &
  Participation Team
- Mrs S Rymell, Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Early Help
- Mrs G Wall, Voice, Involvement & Participation Strategic Manager

**Others in Attendance**
- Children in Care Council Representatives

**Apologies**
- Mrs S Harrison, Director of Children’s Services
- Mrs J Ogley, Director of Social Care, Health and Housing
1. Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on the 30 May 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2. Members’ Interests

Councillor Mrs A Dodwell declared an interest as a member of the Council’s Fostering Panel.

It was noted that a number of Corporate Parenting Panel Members were School Governors.

3. Chair’s Announcements

The following announcements and communications were made:

- The average attainment 8 score for a cohort of 19 young people in Year 11 had increased by 7.3 points compared to 2017. This has brought the average to 23.2 which was higher than the national average of 18.9 or statutory neighbor of 20. Central Bedfordshire Council is first in comparison with its statutory neighbours and 16th nationally, putting the local authority in the upper quartile.
- The Director of Children’s Services attended the launch of the Lifelong Links project by the Children’s Minister at the House of Commons. The project helps to identify a network of family and friends who have played important part in young person’s life. The Voice, Involvement & Participation Strategic Manager explained that the project was in its early stage, but six young people had already volunteered to take part. Work currently taking place included mobile mapping of young people and obtaining information from parents.
- The Central Bedfordshire Looked After Children and Care Leavers Achievement Awards were taking place on the 20 September 2019. The theme for this year’s awards is Film. An email would be sent to all Councillors asking for contributions towards the event such as red carpet, camera booths etc.

4. Understanding our Looked After Children Population

The Panel considered a report on the population of Looked After Children/Young People and Care Leavers in Central Bedfordshire.

Points and comments included:

- As of the 30 June 2019 there were 310 Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire.
- This figure had fluctuated over the last 9 months but continued to remain around the same level.
• The data showed that Central Bedfordshire was broadly in line with its statistical neighbours and the National Average which was provided a good benchmark for how the local authority is performing.
• The data shown in the report is taken at a certain point in time rather than reflecting academic year groups.
• The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help advised that work was taking place to ensure that young people leaving care have the right support and packages in place. This included working with the housing team to provide suitable semi-independent living where necessary.
• The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help explained that supported living accommodation for 16-18 year olds was not currently regulated nationally. In Central Bedfordshire children were placed with a list of preferred accommodation. Children’s Services would receive notification from Commissioning if any children were placed in unapproved accommodation and the appropriate steps would be taken to move the child to an alternative placement.
• The Assistant Director Safeguarding and Early Help advised that thought could be given to the provision of in-house independent living similar to the in-house foster care offer.

NOTED

the report on the Looked After Children and Young People populations in Central Bedfordshire.

5. Children in Care Council and Participation 2018/19 Annual Report

The Panel received the Children in Care Council and Participation 2018/19 Annual Report in conjunction with exempt Minute Item 10.

Points and comments included:

• The Aspirations List had given members of the CiCC the opportunity to explore a range of hobbies, valuable work experiences, and aspirations.
• The Children and Young People’s Pledge is a set of promises that CBC makes to all children in care and care leavers. The Pledge was ever evolving with the aim of ensuring every young person has an input.
• The information presented by the CiCC at the Eastern Peer Review was being shared by Peer Reviewers within their own local authorities.
• Following the Looked After Children’s Review, a prototype model to make young people’s reviews more friendly and to encourage more young people to co-chair their review was being co-produced with children and young people. This would be piloted during the summer.
• The film made by all Children in Care Councils which was premiered on the 17 April 2019 in Greenwich would be shared with colleagues and Corporate Parenting Panel members.
• Joint working was taking place with the Children’s Commissioning team to help ensure that care providers are providing the highest quality 16+ supported living accommodation services to care leavers.
• The CiCC had been approached for the fifth year running to deliver presentations and workshops to 500+ Frontline students at Warwick University. Frontline is a national programme that recruits and trains social workers to provide a one-year employment-based qualification.
• A new care leaver group had been set up last year to ensure all young people are supported as they transition into adulthood. The group also contributed to CBC’s Financial Policy which has helped give young people an understanding of financial needs when living independently and the confidence of what they can spend money on without worrying.
• Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel were encouraged to familiarise themselves with Inspire Me, the app designed for care leavers by care leavers that enables former care leavers who are now living independently and learning or working, to share their positive stories and reflect on their experiences.
• The challenge remained to reach out to those children and young people whose voices are less easily heard such as those placed out of county or who find it difficult to speak up and to endeavor to give young people the opportunity to join the CiCC.
• There is more work to be done around increasing the profile and knowledge of the Children in Care Council and making sure young people have the opportunity to attend and be an active part of meetings and events.

NOTED

the Children in Care Council and Participation 2018/19 Annual Report.

6. Ofsted and Eastern Region Peer Review Work Plan 2019/20

The Panel received a report on the contents of the Looked After Children Post Inspection Work Plan.

Points and comments included:

• The Principle Social Worker and Head of Professional Services explained that the Looked After Children Post Inspection Work Plan 2019-20 had been created in response to the recommendations from the Focused Visit and Eastern Region Peer Review.
• The 17 recommendations were of equal importance but recommendations 1-3 were a priority for the Service area as they had been developed as a result of feedback from the Ofsted focused visit.
• A full year of the audit arrangements had now been completed. Evidence was seen of improvements in practice which had resulted from the learning from the audits.
• The additional measure of social workers self-evaluating their own practice as part of audit activity had been added since the Ofsted inspection. 30 case files are selected on a monthly basis and a manager allocated as auditor. Parents and carers are contacted for their views on what is/isn’t working well in order to triangulate a view of the quality of the service provided. Ongoing work included the addition of the voice of the child as part of the audit process.
• Five of the recommendations are defined as process changes such as earlier involvement in journey of the child and the remaining nine are development issues.
• The completion dates for recommendations 1-3 were set within short timescales as they were developed as a result of feedback from the Ofsted focused visit and were on track for delivery. The timescales for the other 14 recommendations had been paced in response to the learning from the 2017 Ofsted inspection and the subsequent action plan.

• The Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Early Help explained that a full Ofsted inspection had taken place in 2017 followed by a focused visit in November 2018. Joint targeted area inspections could also take place with partners such as the Police and Care Quality Commission as well as the annual Ofsted conversation to check and balance the current situation in the Service area, work that had taken place and the next area of development. A SEND Inspection is due imminently.

• The Principle Social Worker and Head of Professional Services advised that the next Ofsted inspection should be 2020.

NOTED

the report on the contents of the Looked After Children Post Inspection Work Plan.

7. Verbal update from the Director of Children’s Services on matters of interest to the Panel

The Panel received a verbal update from the Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Early Help on behalf of the Director of Children’s Services.

Points and comments included:

• Nadhim Zahawi, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families had recently visited Central Bedfordshire Council to discuss the lobbying taking place about unregulated supported accommodation for 16-18 year olds. Visits had taken place to various accommodation in conjunction with Bedford and Luton Borough Councils.

• A round table event had subsequently taken place in Central London in order to try and determine ways forward for the 16-18 provision. The direction of travel appeared to be towards a system of licensing for supported accommodation.

• A recruitment process had taken place for the assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE) programme that gives newly qualified social workers extra support during their first year of employment. 9 new social workers had subsequently been made 18 appointed. The Children in Care Council were commended for their outstanding support for during the recruitment process.

• The Eastern Region self-assessments for Children’s Services had been submitted. The next step was moderation between directors. The self-assessment gave a baseline for Ofsted visits in terms of areas of good practice, where improvements had been made and the focus for future areas of work.

• Work was currently taking place with Public Health on the Youth Offer in Central Bedfordshire. Safeguarding is a complex issue which was becoming more complicated due to the increased risks and dangers of exploitation.

• In response to concerns raised about the recent permission given for semi-independent accommodation for young people in Chalk Hill, Houghton Regis despite objections from Children’s Services and Houghton Regis Town Council, the Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Early Help gave assurance that the Local Authority had not
subsequently placed any children in this accommodation due to concerns about the provider. There was the duty by law for other local authorities to notify Central Bedfordshire Council about any children they place in accommodation within the local authority. The Police would also be notified of any placements.

NOTED

the verbal update from the Assistant Director, Safeguarding and Early Help on behalf of the Director of Children’s Services.

8. Work Programme

Members considered the report of the Committee Services Officer which set out the Panel’s proposed work programme for 219/20

RESOLVED

that the Corporate Parenting Panel work programme, as attached at Appendix A to the report of the Committee Services Officer, be approved subject to the following amendments:

24 October
• Item 6 - Transitions report on Adult’s Social Care/Children with disabilities be deferred to the December meeting.
• Item 10 - Supported Accommodation for 16-17 year olds be deferred to the February meeting.
• Ofsted and Regional Peer Review Action Plan be added.

19 December
• Item 4 – Looked After Children SW Stability report be deleted as this was on the work programme for the October meeting.
• Update from a representative from the Youth Offending Service YOS be added.

17 February
• TACT dictionary be added.
• Update from a Personal Advisor on the support given to a Looked After Child be added.

6 April
• Review of The Pledge and a social activity with the CiCC to be added

that the Adoption and Fostering annual reports be tabled into the work programme.

9. Exclusion of the Press and Public
10. Children in Care Council update

The Panel received a presentation on work being undertaken by the Children in Care Council in conjunction with Minute Item 5.

**NOTED**

the exempt presentation from the Children in Care Council.

12. Virtual School – final reports for Looked After Children 2017/18

The Panel received a report on the role of the Virtual School and the outcomes at Key Stages 1 and 2, and 4 for Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire for the Academic Year 2017/18.

The Head of Service (Inclusion) explained that this was her last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel as her role had now changed and she was no longer Head of Virtual School. Members of the Panel were thanked for their continued commitment to the Virtual School during its exceptional journey.

**NOTED**

the report on the role of the Virtual School and the outcomes at Key Stages 1 and 2, and 4 for Looked After Children in Central Bedfordshire for the Academic Year 2017/18 and the progress made.

the steps identified to improve outcomes for Looked After Children in the Academic Year 2018/19.

Chair ..........................

Dated ..........................