

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

20 October 2020

**Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel
October 2019 to September 2020**

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report forms the annual update to Council from the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) in accordance with the Council's Constitution.
- 1.2 The government introduced clear corporate parenting principles that require all departments within a local authority including staff, elected members and partner agencies to recognise their role as a corporate parent and encourage them to look at the support and services they provide. The principles are:
- To act in the best interest and promote the physical, mental health and wellbeing of children and young people looked after;
 - To encourage children and young people looked after to express their views, wishes and feelings;
 - To consider the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people looked after;
 - To help children and young people looked after to gain access to, and make the best use of, the services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
 - To promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for children and young people looked after;
 - To ensure children and young people looked after are safe and have stability in their home lives, relationships, education and/or work place;
 - To prepare children and young people looked after for adulthood and independent living.

2. Background

- 2.1 The role of Wiltshire's Corporate Parenting Panel is to secure Councillor involvement and commitment throughout the Council to deliver better outcomes for children and young people who are looked after or care experienced. All Councillors are reminded that they have responsibilities as a "corporate parent" for children and young people who are Looked After in Wiltshire.
- 2.2 Wiltshire Corporate Parents are responsible for 467 (end of Quarter 4 2019/20) children in our care and 175 care experienced young people (aged 18-21). Of those children in our care, 25% are voluntarily accommodated (children were put into the Local Authority's care with the parent's agreement) and the remaining children are subject to an interim or full Care Order.

- 2.3 Councillors Pat Aves, Mary Champion, Pauline Church (Chair), Jane Davies, (Vice Chair), Peter Hutton, George Jeans, Stewart Palmen, and James Sheppard formed the membership of the Panel during the period June 2019 to June 2020. From July 2020, Councillor Laura Mayes became the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills and replaced Councillor Pauline Church on the Panel as Chair. The Lead Officers were Martin Davis (Interim Head of Service – Care, Placements and EDS) who was then replaced by Iona Payne (Head of Children in Care and Young People).
- 2.4 The meetings were regularly attended by the following officers and representatives:

Dexter Chipeni (Commissioning Support Assistant), Kathryn Davis (Service Manager – Virtual Head and Vulnerable Groups), Martin Davis (Interim Head of Service - Care, Placements and EDS), Sally Ellis (Public Health Specialist), Liza Ingleton (Foster Carer and Wiltshire Fostering Association), Sara James (Service Manager – Quality Outcomes & Reviewing Service), Dr Cathy Mallet (Designated Doctor for CLA), Steve Parfitt (Foster Carer and Wilts Fostering Association representative), Lena Pheby (Designated Nurse for Looked After Children), Nicole Smith (Head of Housing Operations & People Service), Karen Stokes (Missing Children and CSE Co-Ordinator), Matthew Turner (Service Manager – Care and Placement Services), Lucy Townsend (Director of Children’s Services), Jay Williams (Kinship and Fostering Manager) and representatives of Wiltshire CCG. Other Officers attended as required to present particular reports.

Tyla Parsons (Care Experienced representative) attended the meetings on 12 November 2019 and 21 January 2020 and Scott Kane and Achannie Blake (Youth Consultants) attended the meeting on 12 November 2019. Lorna and Konrad attended the meeting on 30 June 2020 as representatives from the Children in Care Council.

3. Work Programme

- 3.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) has discussed a broad range of topics whilst considering the young people’s views. A Children in Care Council (CiCC) representative has been invited to attend each Panel meeting and, whilst not able to attend all, they have provided invaluable help and opinion.
- 3.2 During the last reporting period time was spent reworking the strategic priorities to ensure they were focused on young people’s outcomes. Councillors Pauline Church and Stewart Palmen and Lucy Townsend (Director of Children’s Services) met with young people in Autumn 2019 and the strategic priorities were redrafted and shared with the children in care council and then discussed and agreed in the Shared Guardian Session in March 2020.
- 3.3 The Panel has received the following reports and information:

Quarterly Performance Data

- National and Local Key Performance Indicators for Children in Care data
- Looked After Children Missing data and commentary
- Initial Health Assessments and Review Health Assessments
- MOTIV8 (Substance Misuse Service) data

Annual Reports

- Health of Looked After Children – 2018/19
- MOTIV8 Service – 2019/20
- Wiltshire's Independent Visitor Scheme – 2019/20
- Independent Reviewing Officers – 2019/20
- Update on Disruption Meetings – 2019/20
- Adoption West 2019/20

Updates

- Language that Cares (implementation of the language used to describe young people in our care and their experiences)
- Foster Carer Recruitment
- Disruption Meetings
- Work of the Children in Care Council
- Management of the Children's placement budget
- MOTIV8 service
- Family Fostering Groups
- Fostering Excellence Project
- Councillors Strategic Priorities
- Adoption West
- Covid-19 Impact on Children's Services

4. Scrutiny of Performance

- 4.1 There are two aspects to the scrutiny function of the Panel; the receipt of reports relating to the identified priorities (and the resulting analysis and discussion) and the scrutiny of performance data. Over time, a dashboard of performance information has been developed and exception report received at each meeting.

5. The Corporate Parenting Strategy

- 5.1 The Corporate Parenting Strategy was reviewed in early 2018 and through consultation with the Children in Care Council the same seven priority areas for focus were agreed. These continued through to July 2019 when it was decided that these should be reviewed again. Councillors Pauline Church and Stewart Palmen and Lucy Townsend (Director of Children's Services) met with representatives of the Children in Care Council in the autumn of 2019 and these were completely revised with the young people listing their 8 priorities. There is now a revised 2020 Corporate Parenting Strategy incorporating the

new 8 priorities (**attached as Appendix 1**) which is also seeking Council approval at this meeting.

5.2 The fundamental aims of the Corporate Parenting strategy are to ensure that Councillors:

- Understand their roles and responsibilities as Corporate Parents
- Scrutinise and challenge how the Council performs in delivering its services as a Corporate Parent
- Engage effectively, with energy, consistency, and confidence with children and young people so that their voice is heard and has influence
- Support and enable children and young people to challenge where services need to improve.
- Maintain a comprehensive overview of the progress of children who are looked after and care experienced, scrutinising the quality, effectiveness and performance of the services that support them.

5.3 **The Priorities:** The Strategy, has eight strategic priorities. Each member of the Panel has a lead role for a strategic priority ensuring oversight and critical challenge. The revised priorities and the Councillor/Officer lead are detailed below:

1. To have links with my local community where I am trusted, respected and accepted. This means I can access the local community and I am not left out. *Cllr Laura Mayes - Support Officer – Iona Payne*
2. Support for as long as I need it. *Cllr Pat Aves – Support Officer – Neil Adlam*
3. To feel and be safe. *Cllr Peter Hutton – Support Officer – Sara James*
4. To be heard – my voice is not the only way I am heard, it may come out as my behaviour. *Cllr James Sheppard – Support Officer – Sarah Banks/Gary Binstead*
5. Support with my mental health especially at school, at a time and a place that suits me and not services. *Cllr Stewart Palmen – Support Officer – Judy Edwards*
6. Support to be the best I can. *Cllr Jane Davies – Support Officer – Kathryn Davis*
7. Support to be healthy and this includes opportunities to be involved in new activities. *Cllr George Jeans – Support Officer – Sally Ellis*
8. A loving home where I have good relationships, respect and the opportunity to see my family. *Cllr Mary Champion – Support Officer – Matthew Turner*

6. **Our Virtual School**

- 6.1 A new Virtual School Head Teacher was appointed in September 2019, coinciding with the service's move to the Education & Skills directorate. A verbal report was provided by the VSH to CPP in September 2019, to share headline (unvalidated) education outcomes for our children in care at the end of the academic year 2018 -19.
- 6.2 A summary of key post-Ofsted priorities for the Virtual School was also shared, which focused on securing consistency in co-production of PEPs of the highest quality, as a mechanism to secure improved educational outcomes for our looked after children and young people. At CPP, we discussed how this priority sits alongside ongoing work to improve the use of educational performance data (progress and attainment), ensuring that support and challenge to schools, colleges and early years settings, results in significant improvements in educational outcomes for our children in care.
- 6.3 In November 2019, the Head Teacher's Report was shared at CPP with an opportunity to scrutinise the Virtual School's performance at each key stage and to understand what this meant in terms of individual children's outcomes.
- 6.4 At the CPP meeting in June 2020, a report on the impact of Covid-19 was shared, which included data on school attendance since 23 March. School attendance of children in care was monitored daily during this period, reaching 46% at the highest point. School attendance decisions were risk assessed by social workers for every child in care.
- 6.5 In order to support work towards strategic priorities, the Virtual School Head linked with the Lead Member for Education and SEND, with meetings held in March and August 2020. The initial focus for the link work on the priority 'support to be the best I can' is focused on education, employment and training opportunities for children in care and care leavers Post 16.

From Conference and Reviewing Officer

B, who is now 19yrs care experienced, from the age of 10 having experienced a difficult family life. Her long-term matched placement broke down when she was around 14/15 because of mental health problems of her carer. She went to another foster placement and then at 18yrs to supported accommodation. B has worked hard at college and has worked in a care home on nights for the last year whilst living in her supported lodgings. She worked all the way through COVID and had to deal with the home losing several their residents to COVID.

B has secured a place to study Adult Nursing at UWE and is moving to live in the halls of residents on soon (*Sept 2020*).

- 6.6 Many education good news stories have been shared at CPP throughout the year. For example, we shared that one of our young people successfully managed what was potentially a very challenging transition from primary to secondary school. He settled very well and was chosen by the head of year 7 as the pupil most deserving for a reward due to his attitude, attendance and his lovely manner. The reward was a paid skiing trip to Austria at the end of last term. Another young person was chosen to be a college ambassador at a recent open day for prospective students. After the event, the college received the following feedback from one of the prospective parents: *“I found everyone who I spoke to very informative and helpful ... One person I was most impressed with was your Public Services student XX, who came across with an enthusiastic and passionate attitude about the college and his progression there which reaffirmed my assurances..... A true ambassador to your college!”*
- 6.7 This academic year has generated many challenges for our children in care and care leavers, with a particularly significant Covid-19 impact for those in exam year groups. We know how hard our care experienced young people have worked; we know that it wasn't always easy and we know how much it matters. We're proud of all they have achieved and look forward to reporting to CPP in the new academic year about the next stages of their education and training.

7. Placement Stability

- 7.1 There is a range of information made available to the Corporate Parenting Panel which helps to indicate the effectiveness of the Council's work in terms of Priority 8 “A loving home where I have good relationships, respect and the opportunity to see my family”. **In November 2019**, the Panel considered information relating to the Language that Cares research carried out by TACT. This helps social workers and others who work with and support our children to use sensitive and appropriate language when they are talking together about what makes their living arrangements work.
- 7.2 The same Panel went on to consider key performance data relating to children in care which helps us to understand the impact that our services have on that group and help us to know whether we are making a difference to the lives of children and young people. For Q2 of 2019, placement stability was good: the number of children experiencing 3+ places within the last 12 months at 7% was below that of the England average, statistical neighbours and statistical neighbours who are 'good'.
- 7.3 The number of children who were in secure long-term places (looked after for at least 2.5 years and in the same place for at least 2 years) at 78% was also better than the England average and statistical neighbours, including those graded as 'good'. The percentage of children living with foster carers was 77%, however of these 46% were living with Wiltshire Council approved carers and the remainder were with IFA carers.

- 7.4 The majority of the remaining children and young people were living in residential children's home or specialist education places. We want as many of our children in care to be with our foster carers as we are sure this provides the best support to them and usually allows them to remain at their local school, in their communities and better allows them to have positive and rewarding family time with their parents and other family members.

J (16, living in residential care) has now raised over £1,000 for a sponsored haircut. One of his carers shaved his hair off for him. He is putting the money towards the NHS and cancer charities at Southampton hospital. This is not something that would have been anticipated from J and shows his developing understanding of the world around him

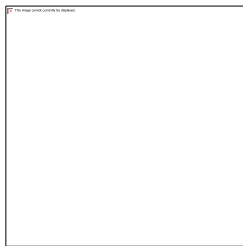
- 7.5 Some of these themes repeated in the reporting to the Panel in **January and March 2020**. At the latter meeting, for Q3, stability showed as being the number of children experiencing 3+ places within the last 12 months at 8% (a 1% increase on the previous quarter), remaining below that of the England average, statistical neighbours and statistical neighbours who are 'good'. The number of children who were in secure long-term places (looked after for at least 2.5 years and in the same place for at least 2 years) stayed at 78%. The percentage of children living with foster carers remained at 77%, with 46% living with Wiltshire Council approved carers. Our number of approved foster carers has remained broadly steady through the year with about 140 households.
- 7.6 In **June 2020**, the Panel again considered the suite of performance information, taking into account Q4 data. Placement stability for children experiencing 3+ placements in 12 months was 9% and for those remaining in long term placements it was 77%. Whilst this represents a very slight decrease in the short term stability measure it is in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic when there were some challenging situations arising and so it is important that the data is tracked into 2021 to better understand the long term impact.
- 7.7 Disruption Meetings allow us to reflect upon situations that arise, leading to unplanned endings of arrangements for children. It is important that we learn the lessons about what happened and what could be done differently in the future, thus improving retention. The main themes reported in **November 2019** were the importance of information sharing, the support given to foster carers, the role of social workers in supporting and challenging carers appropriately and the need to have a robust team around the child.
- 7.8 The Disruption Meeting Annual Report presented in **June 2020** again saw similar themes about the importance of working together and supporting and training foster carers. Whilst no "new" themes emerged it is important to remind workers and services about what is learned from unplanned endings so that improvements in practice are made.

8. Children Missing from Care

- 8.1 To help our work, we need to better understand why children go missing from care and so the data presented at the **March 2020** meeting helped that consideration, again the question is what can be done differently to reduce the likelihood of this happening and bring greater stability to a child or young person's life. There were 60 missing episodes for 24 individual children in care. Most children have Return Interviews which helps us to better understand what has happened.
- 8.2 In **June 2020**, the number of Wiltshire children in care who had been missing was 25, accounting for 79 episodes showing that a similar number of individuals were reported missing more often, the likely reason for the increase being concern about breaching Covid-19 restrictions.

9. Our Fostering Service

- 9.1 In order to try and increase the number of children living with our carers to somewhere close to the target of 60-65%, we need to recruit more foster carers and, over the course of the year, Panel meetings heard about continuing work to achieve this, primarily focused upon social media campaigns.



- 9.2 The impact of not seeing an increase in the number of Council foster carers is that there continues to be pressure placed upon the Placement Budget which supports external places for children with IFA carers, residential providers or those who need supported living before the age of 18. At this time the report showed that significant overspend in the region of £1.3k was anticipated, bringing members' attention to importance of appropriate scrutiny in this area of work. It was recognised that there are ways to try and reduce and better manage the burden placed on the budget; by improving commissioning arrangements and better managing the market, by recruiting more foster carers for the Council as indicated above and by retaining the carers that we have.

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FOSTERING
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Information pack



- 9.3 The Panel heard about the new Fostering Excellence project which has brought significant capital funding to the continuing challenge of recruiting more foster carers for the Council and, as indicated, a significant increase in this pool of carers will lead to improvement in a number of ways as there will be choice and opportunity to match children and young people with carers which is likely to bring greater stability.
- 9.4 Throughout reporting, the number of children in long term, matched foster placements (either in-house or with IFAs) is high. Fostering information showed that the progress of the Fostering Excellence project was starting to grip, accelerated by the new campaign launch – “Everyday matters” – which coincided with Fostering Fortnight in May. The numbers of applications from those who wanted to be approved as Wiltshire Council foster carers is growing.

Terry has recently resigned as a foster carer after over 24 years fostering for Wiltshire, after the young man with some additional needs, he has cared for over the last eight years moved to a new home to support him into adulthood. Terry is 81 years old and was our oldest foster carer.

9.5 Whilst it is too early to see the full impact of Fostering Excellence it is anticipated that results of the investment and new activity will be seen during 2020/21.

10. Our Adoption Service

10.1 Adoption West is a collaboration between Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, Gloucestershire, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire and Wiltshire local authorities, whose aim is to deliver an adoption service that offers improved outcomes for both children and those who want to adopt. Working together as part of a larger region will help recruit new families more effectively, enable children to move into their permanent homes faster and will improve adoption support services as well as allowing best practice to be shared and make our services even better.

10.2 In **March**, the Panel received the six month interim report of Adoption West and the performance of the Council in terms of achieving legal permanence for children through adoption. The headlines of the report were that in Q1 and Q2 of 2019/20 14 Adoption Orders were granted (33 in the previous year), 11 children were placed for adoption and 14 Wiltshire based families had been approved as suitable to adopt. Adoption timeliness continued to be positive.

10.3 Achieving permanence for children through adoption is a high priority for the Council and this shows that we are on track for a similar number of adoptions to be achieved this year. The Adoption West partnership continues to develop with regular scrutiny through Cabinet and its own partnership scrutiny arrangements.

11. Participation of looked after children

11.1 At **June 2020** Panel, The Conference and Reviewing Service Annual Report was presented. The work and impact described in this helped the Panel to understand how children and young people are best supported.

11.2 When a child can contribute directly to their review and it is held on time, the likelihood is that the arrangement will be better, difficulties can be spotted and resolved more quickly and children will have a positive family experience living with their foster carers and enjoying opportunities to achieve and succeed. The report showed that in the year 2019/20 just over 89% of children and young people participated in their reviews. This is good however we want to aim for a participation rate of 95%. This will then provide further evidence to Priority 4 - *To be heard – my voice is not the only way I am heard, it may come out as my behaviour.*

“We sought feedback from children/young people and their families about their reviews and child protection conferences using feedback forms in February 2020. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Children and young people say they feel listened to, their participation in the reviews is encouraged and they can say what they want during the meeting” (pg.8).

*Conference and Reviewing Service
(IRO) Annual Report
1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020*

- 11.3 “Language that Cares”, was discussed at the start of the year which focused on the implementation of the language used to describe young people in our care and their experiences. Language That Cares is a collaborative effort led by the TACT organisation that aims to change the language of the care system. Language That Cares is a list of words and phrases used in the care system although not exhaustive that was put together by children and young people.
- 11.4 For example, “care leaver”, the preference of young people was care experienced: *“We prefer ‘care experienced’ but we are not always keen on the word ‘care’ as this can mean anything due to ‘care’ having a wide definition.”* Cheshire East Young People” (pg. 5, Language that Cares, 2019). The other example is “LAC:” *“Take away LAC acronym completely.”* (Herefordshire Young People) or *“The acronym ‘LAC’ can be understood as a suggestion that the child or young person is ‘lacking’ something.”* (pg.9 Language that Cares, 2019).
- 11.5 A full glossary/dictionary of words is being developed within Families and Children’s Services focussing on the language in social work. Workshops have taken place in February with young people’s views obtained face to face regarding the dictionary of words. This will be launched later this year.

12. Children in Care Council (CiCC)

- 12.1 The Children in Care Council is a key stake holder group relating to matters included in the Corporate Parenting agenda. There is a mature relationship between CiCC and as a result young people have helped to shape the way in which we undertake our work. Through the Shared Guardian sessions, they have helped to influence the work and priorities of the CPP.
- 12.2 Historically, following each meeting of the Panel there was a ‘Shared Guardian’ session where young people and Councillors met to discuss key themes. While these sessions have largely been successful as evidenced by the ‘You Said, We Did’ audit, following feedback from the young people we changed the format of these meetings, agreeing to hold two business meetings and two social events in the year.
- 12.3 For the Shared Guardian Session on 10 September 2019 the Children in Care Council had asked for a session to include Mental Health and how they could support the Social, eMotional and mental Health service using technology in Wiltshire (SOMEHOW) Project, with a view to their views being captured on what they think works, what could be improved and how it’s best to deliver support services to young people. The project is piloting a new approach to identifying and responding to social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs in primary school children, making best use of multi-agency working and digital innovation. The aim is to upskill school staff to respond to emerging SEMH challenges, and for specialist services to respond proactively and holistically when further support is required.

- 12.4 An interactive session was held with the Corporate Parents, Senior Officers and the young people representatives with several group exercises to review current services and give feedback on what works well and what needs to improve.
- 12.5 For the Shared Guardian Session on 10 March 2020 we took the opportunity to discuss with the CiCC representatives what they would want to see happening to progress the Panel's new strategic priorities that had been drawn up following a session held with a group of young people in October 2019. The Chair explained that the 8 priorities had been allocated to each of the 8 Corporate Parenting Panel Members and that they would also have an Officer to support them. The young people present were asked for their views on what the priorities meant to them.
- 12.6 Iona Payne suggested that as there is a Councillor (Corporate Parent) and an Officer linked to each of the Panel's strategic priorities, maybe there could be a young person too. This was agreed by the CiCC and a young person has been matched up with the priorities.
- 12.7 At the Shared Guardian Session on 22 September 2020 CiCC asked to have a discussion/workshop on mental health awareness.
- 12.8 Membership of CiCC has steadily grown throughout the year however this work will continue throughout 2020/21 and more members of CiCC will be recruited so that the group is as representative of the care population in Wiltshire as possible and includes broad and consistent membership, allowing momentum to be built for the work they take forward. Attached as **Appendix 2** is a copy of the Annual Report of the Children in Care Council for 2019/20.

13. Performance:

- 13.1 Over time, performance reporting has developed to include local authority data alongside comparative data from statistical neighbours and the England average. The most recent data is for Q1 2020/21 (as at 30th June 2020). (See **appendix 3**) In year, expected ranges and targets across all KPI's have been reviewed in consultation with Heads of Service and a revised suite of KPI and target ranges were presented and approved at the Performance and Outcomes Board in June 2020. These KPI and target ranges include:
- Data relating to looked after children including social work performance, health and education outcomes, where they are living and placement stability
 - Private Fostering data
 - Adoption data focusing on outcomes for Wiltshire Council's children.
- 13.2 The full dataset is not repeated here, however, it is relevant to provide the following overview information which connects to the CPP priorities:

Number of children under 18 yrs in the care of Wiltshire local authority between 2013 - 2020 (at 31st March each year)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Children	446	397	404	419	443	444	462	467

Proportion of children per 10,000 of the under 18 population between 2013 - 2020 (at 31st March each year)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Wiltshire	43	39	39	40	42.6	42.3	44.3	44.2
Statistical Neighbour	42	43	45.3	48	52	53	56	n/a
England	60	60	60	60	62	64	65	n/a

Number of children entering care by age

	Q2 19/20		Q3 19/20		Q4 19/20		Q1 20/21	
	Children	%	Children	%	Children	%	Children	%
Under 1	13	25%	10	32%	10	23%	7	23%
1 – 4	14	27%	5	16%	6	14%	6	19%
5 – 9	6	12%	3	10%	14	32%	9	29%
10 - 15	14	27%	8	26%	8	18%	9	29%
16+	5	10%	5	16%	6	14%	0	0%
Total	52	100%	31	100%	44	100%	31	100%

Number of current looked after children by age (at end of quarter)

	Q2 19/20		Q3 19/20		Q4 19/20		Q1 20/21		England (2019) %
	Children	%	Children	%	Children	%	Children	%	
Under 1	19	4%	25	5%	26	6%	27	6%	5%
1 - 4	49	10%	45	10%	47	10%	45	10%	13%
5 - 9	62	13%	63	14%	72	15%	68	15%	18%
10 - 15	203	43%	198	43%	198	42%	195	44%	39%
16+	137	29%	134	29%	124	27%	113	25%	24%
Total	470	100%	465	100%	467	100%	448	100%	100%

13.3 The recent commentary discussed at the CPP meetings.

- Over the last 5 years the number and rate of children in care in Wiltshire has increased from a low base. Despite this, the current Wiltshire rate of 42 per 10,000 remains significantly below statistical neighbours (56 per 10,000), other 'outstanding' local authorities (48 per 10,000) and significantly below the England average (65 per 10,000).
- Given Wiltshire's low levels of deprivation, we would expect the rate of children in care to be below the national average. We have confidence in our threshold and know through external scrutiny (Ofsted 2015 and 2019) that we bring children into care at the right time. However, the growth in numbers of children in care we have seen will likely steadily continue in the future, despite minor fluctuations. Original 2020 modelling forecasts using long-term data across a broad range of indicators (e.g. relationship between referrals and rate of Child in Need (CIN)/Support and conversion into CLA), and national, local and strategic intelligence (including from FACT, Support and Safeguarding Service (SASS) evaluation, POG (Performance Outcome Group) and POB (Performance Outcome Board)) suggest we are likely to see our children in care numbers rise annually by 14-17 each year until 2023. More recently as part of Covid-19 recovery demand modelling the number of children looked after is estimated to increase by 25 (from base) for 2020/21.
- The age profile of children in care is broadly in line with the England profile.
- The placement profile is also in line with the England profile with 78% (349) of children placed with foster carers. However only 43% (151) of these children are placed with Wiltshire Council carers and currently 44 children (13%) are placed in children's homes. The number of children placed in children's homes is higher than we would anticipate and does create additional financial pressure. A fostering transformation plan (Fostering Excellence) has been approved by Senior Management Team (SMT) and implementation began in April 2020. Through a range of measures, we will seek to increase the number of carers, the resilience of foster placements and achieve better outcomes for children.
- In the first quarter of 2020-21, 100% of reviews for children in care were held in timescale and 96% included the views of children. Exceptions reports are provided to the Service Manager who monitors all late reviews. Furthermore, in the last 12 months, work has been undertaken to develop a suite of monitoring reports to track review timeliness and participation in 'real time', whilst at the same time encouraging Independent Reviewing Officers to monitor their own performance via the use of these self-service reports.
- Distant placements. The percentage of our children who are placed outside of Wiltshire at 29% is better performance than Statistical Neighbours (SN's) and the England average. However, England averages are skewed by small unitary authorities and London boroughs where children are frequently placed outside the Local Authority boundary but still close to home and for this reason we report on children placed over 20 miles from home. At 36% we are above both SN (31%) and England average (20%). This reflects the challenges of securing local independent fostering and residential placements

while the number of children in care within Wiltshire and across the region continues to grow. In addition to the Fostering Excellence approach described above further work is required to engage more effectively with local providers to improve our access to local placements. This piece of work is being progressed by our Children's Commissioning Service.

- Placement stability. Despite limited placement choice our reported placement stability rates are strong across both measures. The number of children experiencing 3+ placements within the last 12 months at 7% is below that of the England average (10%) and LA's that are 'outstanding' (12%). Latest provisional Q1 regional benchmarking shows we also perform better than the South West regional average (12%) The number of children who are in secure long-term placements (looked after for at least 2.5 years and in the same placement for at least 2 years) at 79% is also better than the England average (69%), 'outstanding' LAs (68%). Again, provisional Q1 regional data also shows we have a higher rate of placement stability than our South West average (64%). An audit is currently underway to identify learning where children have experienced multiple moves, this learning will be reported to CPP when available. We are also introducing new checkpoints within Liquid Logic to ensure placement addresses are always up to date, this may impact negatively on reported stability rates in the future if we find incorrect placement addresses recorded.
- Visits – overall the improvements in the timeliness of visits to our children in care has been maintained throughout Q1 with 95% of visits being in time and performance is now good and consistent across both teams. This improved performance has been helped, in part, by the development of a range of self service reports which enable managers to keep better track of when visits are due in 'real time'.
- Private Fostering – 1 new private fostering notification was received in Q1 and the visit was completed within 7 days (day 4).
- Adoption – The number of children adopted in Q1 was below expectation (2), as was the percentage that were placed within 12 months of the decision that they should be adopted (80%), however since the end of June, performance has started to improve. Numbers of children in this cohort are very small so any change, even small, will have a significant impact on performance. At the end of June, 25 children were in adoptive placements and therefore it is expected that the total number of adoptions in 2020-21 will fall within the expected range. After several years of continued improvement against the adoption scorecard measures however, performance is anticipated to worsen in 2020-21 as several older children, and therefore those harder to place, are adopted. This reflects our priority in seeking the best permanence option for the child, even if this takes slightly longer to do so.

13.4 Priorities for the next period include:

- Improve compliance with the KPI range measures in order to improve outcomes for children

- Improve placement sufficiency so that more children are looked after by Wiltshire approved foster carers, closer to their homes, schools and communities
- Maintain recent improvements in visits to, and assessments of, Privately Fostered children
- Continue to ensure timely adoption for children where it is in their best interest
- Have a clear line of sight regarding outcomes for care experienced young people and our local offer.

14. Challenges/successes during Covid-19

14.1 Early March 2020 saw the impact of the coronavirus, now known as COVID-19 on the country and therefore on the work of the local authority with government directed restrictive movement, temporary closure of businesses and the need for social distancing. This therefore required a change in the way we worked with children, young people and their families.

14.2 A report was presented to Corporate Parenting Panel in June that provided an outline of the challenges posed to the Families and Children's services and the impact on changes to maintain effective support and safeguarding practices. However, there were also opportunities that allowed the service to think about how we could do somethings differently in the longer term.

- New COVID-19 practice standards and guidance were written, circulated to all staff and regularly updated
- Guidance was audited against Department of Education and Ofsted guidance
- Risk assessments were undertaken of all open child in need (CIN), child protection (CP) and children looked after (CLA) cases, and all cases were RAG rated. These were constantly reviewed and reassessed with case summaries placed on each child's record.
- Children, young people and families who were rated Red were visited face to face unless there was shielding, or risk determined face to face contact to be avoided; children, young people and families rated amber and green had a combination of virtual contact or face to face visits.
- Social workers and their managers worked with colleagues in School Effectiveness and the Virtual School to support vulnerable children back into school
- Meetings were held remotely via Microsoft teams to ensure the timeliness of CLA reviews, ICPC and RCP meetings.
- Canon's and Aspire Homes experienced staffing issues however Aspire were able to redeploy sufficient staff to remain operational and Canon's had positive support from colleagues in Adult Services to be included on the staff rota.
- Canon's maintained opening four nights per week as some families chose to shield their children, however is now open back up to its full seven nights since July
- Foster Carers were offered additional support, including an increase in contact from supervising social workers

- Fostering Excellence Campaign “Everyday Matters” as mentioned earlier was launched during this period, which had a good level of coverage
- Online training has also now been developed for new prospective Foster Carers
- Support to care leavers was enhanced, including funding WiFi and mobile data where need, and care leavers received a treat box from their PA.
- Latterly laptops were issued from the government to children, young people and care experienced where needed to ensure continued access to educational or training studies.

15. Ofsted Inspection

15.1 In June 2019, the Families and Children’s Service was inspected by Ofsted and there were five areas identified as needing to improve:

- Raising awareness of Private Fostering in the community
- The impact of services on children’s health and education when they are in care
- The clarity and accuracy of children’s records when they are in care
- The availability of suitable placements when children first come into care
- The quality of social work supervision.

15.2 Progress on actions in response to these areas are highlighted below:

Raising awareness of Private Fostering in the community

Improvements/positives in the last 12 months April 2019 – March 2020:

- Drop in sessions set up with the Private Fostering Social Worker during Private Fostering week (July 2019) for staff to gain advice and information about Private Fostering.
- An internal Private Fostering referral form has been devised to assist with accurate information being gained from Safeguarding Social Workers about any Private Fostering Arrangements on their caseloads requiring a Private Fostering assessment.
- A review of where the function of private fostering should sit within the Families and Children’s Service was undertaken and it was agreed it remains in Kinship and Fostering to ensure consistency and oversight
- Improved oversight of Private Fostering cases in the Kinship team, with consistency of workers.
- Safeguarding Vulnerable People Panel (SVPP) are aware of their responsibilities in raising awareness about Private Fostering through their website and multi-agency strategies.
- MASH team helps with raising awareness through their contacts and networks
- Initial visits have been completed within the statutory timescale and where not achieved, this was due to carer/child unavailability
- During the restrictive movement Kinship Q&A virtual workshops were set up, this included helping people understand how to identify PF arrangements.

From May 2020 three sessions have been held, accessed by 50 members of staff. Further workshops are planned monthly for the rest of 2020.

- The team has worked with the Marketing Officer for Fostering to develop the Private Fostering Awareness Action Plan 2020 – 2021; the Marketing Officer also undertakes a range of Private Fostering awareness raising activities
- The 2019/20 Private Fostering Annual Report will be shared at Corporate Parenting Panel in September 2020

The impact of services on children's health and education when they are in care

In the 2019 Ofsted Report, inspectors stated that leaders are not sufficiently rigorous in their monitoring of the work and impact of the virtual school officers resulting in the quality of personal education plans (PEPs) being variable. Since the inspection:

- New Quality Assurance processes for PEPs drafted October 2019 and finalised November 2019
- There is now a PEPs feedback and resubmission process for active PEPs via Welfare Call e-PEP from November 2019.
- An internal PEP audit schedule has been created and is now in place; first

R, aged 13yrs, came into care in May 2019, with a care order being granted in September 2019, he lives with long term foster carers. His school have reported that R is on target to be in the top 8% in the country for English GCSE with a predicted grade of 9.

Regarding the health needs of children in care, inspectors stated that “challenges remain in ensuring that all children benefit from a timely initial and review health assessment”.

- In response to this an action was put in place for the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to lead a review of the effectiveness of Virgin Care and implement recommendations. Due to COVID-19 this review is still ongoing.
- The commissioning arrangements and more detailed KPIs for Virgin Care have been completed in July 2020
- In 19/20, the CCG commissioned an in-depth review of CIC health services including those provided by Virgin Care and CAMHS. By the end of Q1 20/21 IHA performance had improved significantly with 94% of IHA's completed within 28 days. This is subject to ongoing scrutiny and challenge by the Corporate Parenting Panel and overall, within the whole cohort of children in care, 96% of children had a medical within 19/20.

The clarity and accuracy of children's records when they are in care

- Lifestory Training has been added to our Learning and Development Offer
- Practice leads have been recruited and identified in the children in care teams
- A range of improvements have been implemented in Liquid Logic (children's management information system),
- “At a Glance” performance reporting has been developed in real time for children in care teams, these allow reporting by exception and monitoring and enables managers to report in the performance outcome group (POG).

The availability of suitable placements when children first come into care

- A review of the effectiveness of the STEPS (Short Term and Emergency Placement) scheme was undertaken in the autumn of 2019 and will be repeated again in Autumn 2020. The findings from 2019 identified the lack of sufficiency of move on places being identified in a timely way.
- Introduction of Fostering Excellence will aim to increase the number of foster carers, therefore reducing the “churn” of places with STEPS carers
- The Fostering Excellence Plan is now in its implementation stage, showing improved recruitment activity and will achieve its target of a net increase of 20 carers

The quality of social work supervision

- “At a Glance” reports have been developed in Liquid Logic for CIC, CIN and CLA and include case supervision
- Practice leads have been recruited to develop peer level scrutiny of supervision on a monthly basis and outcomes reported through Performance Outcome Groups and Performance Outcome Board
- Principal Social Worker has developed reflective supervision through Research in Practice training for March and July 2020, further training being identified.

16. Impact and Ambition

16.1 The Corporate Panel has received a breadth of activity relating to Wiltshire’s children in care and care experienced young people. The body of this report indicates areas of impact whilst others are more subtle and are likely to arise because of raised awareness of the issues that most directly affect the lives of this group of children and young people:

- The Children in Care and Care Leavers Council continues to evolve which ensures that the voices, experiences and opinions of our children and young people are reflected in operational practice development and in new areas of policy.
- Members have been able to consider key performance information relating to our children looked after and care experienced therefore allowing them to question officers about effectiveness, however this is balanced with narratives around good new stories, celebration of successes and raising awareness across the Council.
- The strategic priorities have been reviewed and updated these have started to be driven jointly by Members and lead officers however are in the early stages due to the impact of COVID-10.

- Return interviews, following missing episodes, are more regularly completed and the learning gained from them is incorporated into service development and our response to children who go missing, including those vulnerable to CSE.
- Members have been provided with information about Fostering Excellence and how this work is progressing, including the new marketing campaign.
- There is a strong offer of council-wide support available to care experienced young people. The existing core offer will be further developed with the support of the CPP and will need to be a significant focus of the CPP over the next 12 months.

16.2 It is important that the CPP ensures the best possible support is available to children in care and those who are care experienced. In terms of ambition, we want to achieve the following:

- Narrow the gap in outcome and achievement, in the broadest sense, between our children and young people and others living in Wiltshire, thus reducing disadvantage and stigma
- For each of the priority areas, ensure that there are identified actions developed from scrutiny and challenge so that the CPP is an effective driver of change and improvement
- Ensure that the comprehensive and innovative care offer to care experienced young people is based upon what they say they want and is effective. This will draw upon Council wide services and those that are provided by partner organisations and will be available to all our young people, including those who live outside Wiltshire, where applicable
- Continue to improve educational outcomes for our children and young people as we know this improves resilience and problem-solving skills, improve health and lifestyle outcomes and reduce social isolation – these are things that young people are concerned about
- Increase accommodation options for children and young people, including approving more foster carers and Supported Lodgings providers, developing semi-independent and independent living options within Homes for Wiltshire and the voluntary sector
- Be sure that the voices of children and young people continue to be heard and understood by members, officers and all corporate parents whilst ensuring that these opinions are fully reflected in practice improvement.



One of Wiltshire's young people who is fostered and, on our Independent Visitor scheme, won a national competition to draw a logo for a campaign launched by the National IV Network. Her drawing was worked into a design which is now being used alongside national campaign materials. She was very excited to win and has received a framed copy of her design by the network and a gift voucher!

- 17.1 The Corporate Parenting Strategy is currently under review with an ambition to have full Council approval for the revised Strategy in October 2020, with the updated strategic priorities included. An enhanced reporting system has helped to ensure greater impact by panel as evidenced in the updates from strategic leads contained within this report. Whilst the reports have provided for Members to have a greater understanding of children in care and care experienced young people, there is a recognition that to be the best corporate parent the Panel needs to have increased narratives of children and young people's lived experience.
- 17.2 This reporting period has also seen a change of chairing responsibility (June 2020). Since the Ofsted inspection in 2019 the Families and Children's Service continues to work to address the areas identified for improvement whilst also striving to become an outstanding authority.

17.3 The effectiveness of the CPP will continue to develop, supported by robust dataset and key performance indicator reporting.

17.4 We will:

- a) Review all priority areas to ensure they are being achieved and therefore the best impact upon outcomes for children and young people.
- b) Continue to work closely with the Children in Care Council to ensure that the voices and experiences of children and young people in care are reflected in the work of the CPP and hence the wider Families and Children's Services.
- c) Promote the importance of fostering and review the impact of the Fostering Excellence programme of work.
- d) In partnership with health colleagues, continue to track the improvement in health outcomes for children and young people, continuing to ensure that Initial and Review Health assessments are completed in a timely way as already evidence during Panel reporting.
- e) Further strengthen and develop the offer for care experienced young people, particularly ensuring that those living outside Wiltshire are not disadvantaged.

18. Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel

18.1 The Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel (SCYPP) (which was established in February 2014) has continued to meet in July, September and November 2019 and March, June and September 2020. The role of the SCYPP is to secure Councillor involvement and commitment throughout the Council to deliver better outcomes to ensure that all Wiltshire children and young people are safe.

18.2 Councillors Pat Aves, Mary Champion, Jane Davies (Vice Chair), Ross Henning, Peter Hutton, George Jeans and Pauline Church (Chair) formed the membership of the Panel during the period July 2019 to July 2020. From July 2020 Councillor Pauline Church stepped down from Panel having changed Cabinet Member responsibility and she was succeeded by Laura Mayes as the Chair. The Lead Officers are Netty Lee and Jen Salter (Heads of Service – Support and Safeguarding).

18.3 In the last year, the SCYPP has continued to receive briefings to enhance member's knowledge and understanding of Families and Children's Services responsibilities for safeguarding children and young people.

18.4 This has included; overviews of the core data which explains how the data is captured and monitored and used to compare Wiltshire with neighbouring

councils and agencies, updates on the Families and Children's Transformation (FACT) Programme, overviews of missing children and young people data, including specific analysis of the decline in missing episodes and consideration of case studies to consider threshold examples.

18.5 Also the following updates - Pressures on the Families and Children's Service, Integrated early support in communities FACT workstream, Children's Commissioning and placement sufficiency, the spend of Wiltshire's Soft Drinks Industry Levy, Wiltshire's Obesity rates in children, impact of Covid-19 on the service, the re-establishment of Multi Agency Forums, findings and analysis following the reduction in the number of child protection plans during Q3 2019/20, the overall FACT Programme and the annual Private Fostering report for 2019/20.

19. Main Considerations for the Council

19.1 The Council is asked to note the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel to date and the success within year to strengthen its functions and impact of its work.

20. Overview and Scrutiny

20.1 In accordance with the agreed overview and scrutiny arrangements under Covid-19, the Children's Select Committee was unable to consider the draft Corporate Parenting Panel report at a formal meeting, prior to the report being considered by Full Council on 20 October 2020.

20.2 A briefing was therefore arranged for the chair and vice-chair of the Children's Select Committee on Monday 5 October 2020, during which the following was agreed:

- That an additional appendix to show the figures / data evidencing the performance information within the report would be included with the report;
- That a paragraph would be added to the report to explain some of the changes in terminology as requested by children and young people (children looked after, care experienced, etc.);
- That the report and appendices (as available for the briefing) would be circulated to members of the Children's Select Committee for comments prior to full council.

20.3 Following questions, the number and rate of children in care in Wiltshire were focused on during the briefing as Wiltshire's numbers were significantly lower than national average and statistical neighbours.

20.4 Reassurance was offered that Wiltshire's thresholds had consistently been reviewed as adequate (Ofsted inspections and Oxford Brookes University evaluation) and that the figures in Wiltshire were closer to the "proportion per 10,000" reported by local authorities classed as Good or Outstanding in their Ofsted inspection.

20.5 Positive focus was also given to placement stability during Covid-19 and recognition of the resilience of foster carers and residential settings during these challenging times.

21. Safeguarding Implications

21.1 Within their role as Corporate Parents, Councillors monitor closely the safeguarding of children and young people looked after by Wiltshire Council and in doing so identify issues such as children missing from placement and children at risk of sexual exploitation. These safeguarding functions continue and will be enhanced.

22. Public Health Implications

22.1 Looked After Children are at particular risk of experiencing inequalities in health outcomes due to their difficult start in life. Within their role as Corporate Parents, Councillors monitor the health and wellbeing support received by our looked after children to ensure they receive regular holistic assessments of their needs supported by appropriate and accessible service provision. This may include access to a wide range of services including immunisations, emotional wellbeing support or substance misuse services.

23. Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

23.1 Not applicable.

24. Equalities Impact of the Proposal

24.1 The proposals seek to bring Councillors and Officers to work together to ensure that our Looked After Children and Young People have a voice within the Council in order to influence the improvement of services for them.

25. Risk Assessment

25.1 Panel Members are required to have an enhanced DBS check undertaken and Risk Assessments will be drawn up for when visits are made to vulnerable children and when Councillors attend Officer Team Meetings, etc.

26. Financial Implications

26.1 Expenses for young people participating in the CPP will be paid for from the Children in Care budget.

27. Legal Implications

27.1 Ian Gibbons (Solicitor to the Council) has confirmed that the Panel is an Advisory panel and not a Committee of the Council; it can therefore make recommendations but not decisions. Terence Herbert (Chief Executive) is the lead decision maker.

28. Proposal

- 28.1 To receive and note the Annual Report and ratify the improvements required to strengthen Corporate Parenting in Wiltshire.
- 28.2 To receive and approve the revised Corporate Parenting Strategy attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 28.3 To receive and note the Annual Report of the Children in Care Council 2019/20 attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

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Contributors:

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1 October 2020

Background Papers – None

Appendices

- 1 - Revised Corporate Parenting Panel Strategy
- 2 - Annual Report of the Children in Care Council October 2019 to August 2020
- 3 - Children in Care Performance Data 2020/21 Q1 (*as at 30th Jun 2020*)