

**Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel  
June 2015 to May 2016**

**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.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The role of the 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. 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 Councillors Pat Aves, Anna Cuthbert, Andrew Davis (Vice Chairman), Jon Hubbard, Jacqui Lay, Alan MacRae (Chairman), Pip Ridout, and Phil Whalley formed the membership of the Panel during the period May 2015 to May 2016. The Lead Officer is Martin Davis (Head of Service – Care, Placements and EDS). Councillor Alan MacRae stood down as Chairman in February 2016 being replaced by Councillor Laura Mayes (Cabinet Member for Children's Services). The Independent group have chosen not to take a place on the Panel; the Conservative Group have therefore nominated an additional member.

- 2.3 The meetings were regularly attended by the following officers/representatives:

Deborah Barlow (Principal Social Worker), Martin Davis (Head of Care, Placements and EDS), Leanne Field (Senior Commissioning Officer – Children's Social Care – Voice and Influence), Carolyn Godfrey (Corporate Director), Christina Gregory (Voice and Influence Research Policy Coordinator), Jo Harris (Children in Care Council representative), Terence Herbert (Associate Director), Blair Keltie (CSE Manager), Bethany Lewis (Children in Care Council representative), Janice Lightowler (Manager – Conference and Reviewing Service), Dr Stuart Murray (Designated Doctor for Looked After Children), Lena Pheby (Designated Nurse for Looked After Children), Karen Reid (Virtual School Headteacher), Sally Smith (Foster Carer and Chair of Wilts Fostering Association), Karen Stokes (Missing Children

Co-Ordinator) and Matthew Turner (Service Manager – Placement Services). Other Officers attended as required to present particular reports.

### **3. Work Programme**

3.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel has discussed a broad range of topics in depth taking into consideration the young people's views. At every Panel meeting a member of the Children in Care council has been in attendance. CPP have received the following reports and information:

- LAC Missing Data and commentary
- Updates on progress of actions identified at previous Shared Guardian Sessions
- MOTIV8 (Substance Misuse Service) Data
- Updates from the Care Leaver's Charter Working Group
- Update following the Peer Review of Looked After Children
- Information following Ofsted's inspection in summer of 2015
- Annual Health Report of Looked After Children 2014/15
- Annual Report of Wiltshire's Independent Visitor Scheme 2014/15
- Updates on the Looked After Children, Young People and Care Leaver's Improvement Group
- Update from the Strategic Planning Working Group
- Updates on Placement Stability concerns
- Updates on the Adoption West initiative
- Updates on the Capacity issues with the Independent Visitor Scheme
- Approval of a Corporate Parenting Panel Strategy for 2016/18
- Private Fostering Annual Report 2014/15
- Update from the Safeguarding Children and Young People Task Group regarding concerns expressing about the Missing Return Interviews
- Councillors access to the Panel's Agendas and Minutes
- Annual report of the Virtual School Headteacher 2014/2015
- Looked After Children who have Special Educational Needs
- National Performance Indicators data

3.2 Corporate Parenting Panel have continued to monitor closely work that is underway across the Council and partner agencies to improve outcomes for our Looked After Children and Care Leavers. While the Ofsted inspection in June 2015 identified our services as requiring improvement, it also noted many areas of good practice. Outcomes for children looked after continue to improve, children benefit from consistency of worker, the adoption service offers a sensitive and effective service and children leaving care receive an improving level of support in their transition into adulthood. A clear set of strategic priorities have been agreed targeting the key areas in which improvements are required; these include ambitious targets to recruit additional foster carers and return children to Wiltshire placements, achieving legal permanence more quickly for children in long-term care and ensuring our Care Leavers have better access to appropriate housing, education and employment opportunities.

- 3.3 The Annual Report from the Virtual School was presented to CPP on 22 March. Since that date the DfE has published the educational outcomes for Looked after Children in terms of attainment at all key stages: examinations and teacher assessments for 2015; absence (reflecting 2015) and exclusions data (2014) for England and relevant regions.
- 3.4 Data relating to educational outcomes for Looked after Children (statistical neighbours' data is not yet available):
- Wiltshire's 2015 GCSE results for 5 A\*-C including English and Maths have improved to their highest ever and exceeded the England and South West averages for Looked After Children
  - 5 A\*-C are significantly better than the England and South West averages for Looked After Children.
  - Key Stage 2 SATs results overall improved in Key Stage 2 and are in line with the England and South West averages for Looked After Children.
  - There have been no permanent exclusions of Looked after Children since 2008 and the percentage of children with at least one fixed period exclusion is below both England and South West averages.
  - Overall absence from school is lower than both England and South West, with unauthorised absence (lowest to date) at 0.47%. Details of all absence are known and effective actions are taken.
  - Internally measured, attendance for the first half of the academic year (94.8%) is an improvement on 93% overall for the academic year 2014/15.
  - At the time of reporting, 85.9% of Wiltshire's Looked after Children were placed in schools rated by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding. No Looked after Children are in a school rated Inadequate, whether within Wiltshire or placed in another authority.
- 3.5 Aspire House continues to provide an increasing range of activities and support for Looked After and Adopted children and young people, including English, Maths and Science tutoring as well as independent living skills for Care Leavers. 3 young people are likely to receive their accredited Bronze level certificate within the next few weeks.
- 3.6 Both Apprentices, employed by Wiltshire Council and working within the Virtual School, are aiming to complete their training by the end of August. These Care Leavers have followed Customer Services and Youth Work apprenticeships, the latter having been able to secure work placement opportunities with our commissioned provider for supported housing.
- 3.7 The Council is responsible for Canon's House which is an 8 bedroom home in Devizes that provides short-term residential breaks for young people (age 5-17 years) with a severe learning disability who are assessed by Wiltshire

Council's Children's Disability Teams as being in need of that service. Monthly unannounced inspection visits are carried out by a senior Council officer and members of the CPP are invited to attend with the officer to carry out the visit. Between June 2015 and May 2016, seven Councillors have attended as part of the unannounced inspections. Arrangements for this have changed during the year; each Councillor is asked to do two visits in a row for continuity and tracking of any issues raised. The home has been subject to two Ofsted inspections in the year, at the first the home was judged to be 'requires improvement' at the second improvements were noted and a 'sustained progress' judgement awarded.

#### **4. Children in Care Council**

- 4.1 The Children in Care Council are a key stake holder group in the Corporate Parenting agenda. A representative from CiCC attends both agenda setting and wash-up sessions following each meeting of the Panel. There is a mature relationship between CiCC and CPP and it is positive to note that CiCC have been fully involved in the recent CPP performance review and have been able to identify key areas in which the Panel can improve.
- 4.2 Following each meeting of the Panel there is a 'Shared Guardian' session where young people and Councillors meet to discuss key themes. At least 15 young people have contributed to Shared Guardian Sessions over the past year. Council Members and Senior Council Officers from outside of Children's Operational Services have attended to discuss issues such as Housing. This reinforces the whole Council responsibility for the services we provide for children and young people in care and care leavers. These sessions have largely been successful as evidenced by the 'You Said, We Did' audit. However further work is now required to ensure these sessions remain worthwhile.
- 4.3 The original CiCC was successful at being a strong voice for Looked After Children. However, as is the nature of these things, the children grew to adulthood and moved onto other things. As a consequence membership of CiCC is currently quite low and so work is underway to recruit additional members. An induction event was planned for late March and we are confident that membership will increase significantly thereafter. Once membership is established we aim to review how our Shared Guardian Sessions operate to ensure the new group of young people are confident and comfortable with arrangements.

#### **5. Our Performance**

- 5.1 Ofsted undertook an Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers in June 2015. Ofsted concluded Wiltshire's services to Looked After Children require improvement to be good. Inspector's reported the trajectory for improvement is positive and noted that there is a strong culture of learning and ongoing self-evaluation which has ensured that the local authority has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

- 5.2 In relation to corporate parenting arrangements Ofsted reported, *elected members understand their role as corporate parents and can describe their direct involvement with young people. However, strategic corporate parenting arrangements are not yet sufficiently developed, have lacked direction and clear business plans and as a result have not had sufficient impact on improving services and outcomes for children and young people cared for by the local authority. Action is being taken to address this.*
- 5.3 Subsequent to this inspection the Children in Care Council were asked their view on the effectiveness of Corporate Parenting arrangements. In a letter to CPP they wrote; *'as part of the Children in Care Council we give 100% but we need to feel that we get 100% out of all our Corporate Parents at the Corporate Parenting Meetings and the Shared Guardianship as we run this programme and we feel like you don't want to hear our voice.'*
- 5.4 The criticisms levelled by Ofsted and by young people have been accepted. The Panel has recognised that there is a need to strengthen performance and has taken action to improve.
- 5.5 A review of the Corporate Parenting Terms of Reference has been completed and a new strategy incorporating these was agreed by CPP on 26 January 2016. The fundamental aims of this new 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 for care leavers, scrutinising the quality, effectiveness and performance of the services that support them.
- 5.6 Corporate Parents, working with the Children in Care Council have agreed seven new strategic priorities. To ensure that strategic oversight and critical challenge is effective, each member of the Panel will have a lead role in relation to delivery of one strategic priority:
1. Strengthen the Corporate Parenting Role and Corporate Parenting function across Wiltshire Council as a whole. (Laura Mayes)
  2. Continue to improve timeliness of permanency for looked after children across the range of permanency options. (Andrew Davis and Sally Smith)

3. Ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for looked after children within Wiltshire which meets the needs of those children. Prioritise placement within Wiltshire. (Pat Aves and Sally Smith)
4. Improve care leavers journey by ensuring an enhanced offer to care leavers across all areas: education, employment and training, independent living, housing options and health. (Jacqui Lay and Pip Ridout)
5. Improve the educational outcomes for looked after children; closing the gap between looked after children and other children in the county. (Phil Whalley)
6. Ensure that looked after children are protected from the risk of child sexual exploitation and reduce the frequency with which some looked after children and care leavers currently go missing. (Anna Cuthbert)
7. Ensure that looked after children and care leavers have timely and easy access to mental health services (Jon Hubbard)

The new Strategy was ratified by Panel on 26 January 2016.

- 5.7 Additional reporting measures have been agreed. The Panel will now report its work through the Wiltshire Council Children's Select Committee. Following each meeting the Chairperson will send a copy of the Panel minutes to the Chairman of Children's Select Committee. On a six monthly basis the Panel Chairperson will prepare a report for Chairman of the Children's Select Committee, addressing progress against each of the seven strategic priorities. In addition to this the Chairperson of the Corporate Parenting Panel will present an annual report to Full Council which will be shared with the Children's Select Committee prior to submission.
- 5.8 The new strategy and reporting mechanism will enable Corporate Parenting Panel to more effectively scrutinise and hold to account the services that work with and support our children in care

## **6. In conclusion:**

- 6.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel has struggled in recent years to fully evidence its impact. The introduction of a Corporate Parenting Strategy, with new strategic priorities and an enhanced reporting system should help to ensure greater impact in the future. This challenge function was evidenced in the final meeting of the year with Panel escalating concerns and requesting an urgent meeting with officers in the Housing Department. Panel members wish to discuss the Council's Draft Housing Strategy due to the lack of priority this gives to Care Leavers.

## **7. Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel**

- 7.1 The Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel (SCYPP) established in February 2014 has continued to meet quarterly. A separate annual report will

be provided in future as the panel takes forward a programme to include strategic oversight and monitoring of a single master set of safeguarding performance indicators.

- 7.2 In the last year the SCYPP has continued to receive briefings on a variety of subjects to enhance member's knowledge and understanding of Operational Children's Services responsibilities for safeguarding children and young people. This has included; the role of early help services, assessment and planning for unborn babies and recruitment and retention of social workers. In addition the programme of Councillors adopting a Social Worker, or an individual case has continued. Members of the Panel either been paired up with a Social Worker to gain some insight into their work, the breadth and range of their cases or followed an individual case from MASH to conclusion, which has included visits to the family home and relevant meetings.

## **8. Main Considerations for the Council**

- 8.1 The Council is asked to note the work of the CPP and the SCYPP to date and its plans to strengthen this function.

## **9. Safeguarding Implications**

- 9.1 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 into the future and will be enhanced.

## **10. Public Health Implications**

- 10.1 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.

## **11. Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

- 11.1 Not applicable.

## **12. Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

- 12.1 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.

## **13. Risk Assessment**

13.1 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.

#### **14. Financial Implications**

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

#### **15. Legal Implications**

15.1 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. Carolyn Godfrey, the Corporate Director for Children's Services is the lead decision maker.

#### **16. Proposal**

16.1 To receive and note the Annual Report and ratify the improvements required to strengthen Corporate Parenting in Wiltshire.

**Carolyn Godfrey**  
**Corporate Director**

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Report Author: Martin Davis (Head of Care, Placements and EDS)

Date of report: 25 April 2016

#### **Background Papers**

None

#### **Appendix**

1 Annual Report of the Children in Care Council April 2015 – March 2016