

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

26 November 2019

**Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel
May 2018 to September 2019**

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 In Wiltshire Corporate Parents are responsible for 470 (end of Quarter 2 2019/20) children in our care and 228 care leavers (aged 18-25). Of those children in our care, 26% are voluntary accommodated and the remaining children are subject to an interim or full Care Order.
- 2.3 Councillors Pat Aves, Mary Champion, Pauline Church, Jane Davies, (Vice Chair), George Jeans, Laura Mayes (Chair), Stewart Palmen, and Philip Whalley formed the membership of the Panel during the period May 2018 to April 2019. The Lead Officers were Martin Davis (Head of Service – Care, Placements and EDS) who was then replaced by Deborah Barlow (Interim Head of Children in Care and Young People).
- 2.4 In July 2019 the membership altered. Councillor Laura Mayes stepped down from panel having changed Cabinet Member responsibility and she was succeeded by Councillor Pauline Church as the Chair. In September 2019 there were further changes and Councillors Mary Douglas (Portfolio Holder for Skills and Social Mobility) and Bridget Wayman joined in place of Councillors Laura Mayes and Philip Whalley.
- 2.5 The meetings were regularly attended by the following officers and representatives:

Emma (Young Person representative), Sarah Banks (Acting Senior Commissioner), Deborah Barlow (Interim Head of Children in Care and Young People), Martin Davis (Head of Care, Placements and EDS then Head of Service, Quality Assurance), Sally Ellis (Public Health Specialist), Judy Edwards (Senior Commissioning Officer), Sara James (Service Manager – Conference & Reviewing Service) Sarah Heathcote (Head of Child Health

Improvement - no longer in post), Terence Herbert (Executive Director), Dr Cathy Mallet (Designated Doctor for LAC), Claudia Megele (Head of Service – Quality Assurance & Principal Social Worker – no longer in post), Denise Milton (Foster Carer and Wiltshire Fostering Association representative), Lena Pheby (Designated Nurse for Looked After Children), Karen Stokes (Missing Children Co-Ordinator), Matthew Turner (Service Manager – Care and Placement Services), Lucy Townsend (Director Families and Children's Services), Chris Whitfield (Virtual School Head – no longer in post), and Jay Williams (Fostering Services Manager). Other Officers attended as required to present particular reports.

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.

The Panel has received the following reports and information:

Performance Data

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

Annual Reports

- Independent Reviewing Officers - 2017/18
- Health of Looked After Children - 2017/18
- Wiltshire's Independent Visitor Scheme - 2017/18
- Update on Disruption Meetings – 2017/18
- Private Fostering - 2017/18
- Virtual School: Headteacher's Report - 2017/18
- Fostering Service – 2018/19
- Private Fostering - 2018/19

Updates

- Children's Placement Budget Management Project
- Looked After Children, Young People and Care Leaver's Improvement Group
- Work of the Children in Care Council
- Adoption West
- Family Fostering Groups
- Councillors Strategic Priorities
- MOTIV8 Referrals
- MOTIV8 Service Update
- Foster Carer Recruitment
- Initial Health Assessment Timeliness

- Virtual School – Provisional examination results 2018/19.

4. Children in Care Council

4.1 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 Guardianship sessions, they have helped to influence the work and priorities of the CPP.

4.2 Historically, following each meeting of the Panel there was a ‘Shared Guardianship’ 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.

- At the Shared Guardianship session held on 18 September 2018 there was a “check in” on an aspect of The Promise (that was adopted in November 2017). “To involve you in decisions about school and to help you get to school so that your education can continue”. Cllr Phil Whalley as Strategic Priority lead and Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills asked questions of the young people present about their likes and dislikes at school and their understanding and experiences of their Personal Education Plans (PEPs). The young people also gave suggestions of what could be done to improve their education experience and their involvement with pupil premium funding and how it is spent.
- Also, at this session, Lucy Lewis talked with the group about their ideas for the change of use of Aspire House in Melksham to register Aspire as a children’s home through Ofsted as part of the “Stronger Families” project which looks to support children in care/care leavers and those on the edge of care. Lucy had been tasked with providing a young person’s guide providing basic information about Aspire, what to expect, what is expected of them and what their rights are and the group spent time looking at what should and should not be included.
- The Children in Care Council had worked in partnership with Bath University to put together the agenda for the Shared Guardianship session on 19 March 2019. Members of the group wanted the opportunity to feedback some positive and negative experiences of their journey in care. Three students who were currently completing a degree in Social Work from Bath University (along with their tutor) attended and facilitated the session in which the young people were asked to talk about the positives and negatives of their Review Meetings and their current and past placements with suggestions for improvements. The group also discussed Social Workers practice and the strengths and areas requiring improvement. The findings from the session would be shared with other Social Work students and be passed onto the Council so that Managers could share the findings with their Teams.
- For the Shared Guardianship 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.

- 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.
- 4.3 Membership of CiCC has steadily grown throughout the year however this work will continue throughout 2019-20 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 1** is a copy of the Annual Report of the Children in Care Council for 2018/19.

5. Scrutiny of Performance

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 **The Strategy:** 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 have continued through to July 2019; and at recent Panel meeting there has been discussion about whether the format of future meetings could be improved and decisions around this are planned for later in 2019.

The fundamental aims of this 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.

5.3 **The Priorities:** Within this Strategy, there are seven Strategic Priorities. To ensure that strategic oversight and critical challenge is effective, it is agreed that each member of the Panel will have a lead role in relation to delivery of a strategic priority. At each Panel meeting we receive a focused update from one of the Lead Members on their Strategic Priorities and these are detailed below:

5.4 CPP Meeting – 18 September 2018 – Councillor Phil Whalley, Lead Member for *Strategic Priority 5 – “Improve the educational outcomes for looked after children; closing the gap between looked after children and other children in the county”*.

At the meeting, the following was highlighted:

- That life chances would be improved if a young person had a good education and that Wiltshire Council had a moral and legal responsibility for all Looked After Children;
- There were currently 280 school aged Looked After Children and the Panel noted the Virtual School’s results across all key stage phases for 2017/18. The Panel was asked to note that those children being assessed for additional support is small (e.g. 7 Key Stage 1 children and 18 Key Stage 2 children) and so this can skew the figures;
- There was some improvement for the KS1 and KS2 results for reading, writing and maths compared to last year although the results for KS4 are weak with 20.9% achieving levels 4-9 in English and Maths;
- Issues that impact on education performance to consider are the age at which a child came into care as this is a factor for when they might start to receive enhanced support, how long they have been in care and what disruptions and changes they have experienced;
- The Virtual School always look to place Looked After Children in Good or Outstanding Ofsted rated schools. If a school is then rated as “Requires Improvement” a judgement is made by the Virtual School and Social Worker as to whether it is in the child’s best interest to be moved to a different school;
- Personal Education Plans (PEPs) will be carried out using an electronic process (ePEP), the designated teachers from each school will be able to use the form to overview progress and identify areas of concern;
- The Pupil Premium (PP) allowance for Looked After Children is £2,300 and it was confirmed that there was a robust process for the release of this funding – schools are required to indicate what they intend to spend it on and what improvements and outcomes are expected. Chris Whitfield (Virtual School Head - VSH) has the ultimate say on the PP spend and will reiterate to schools that education must be the priority for young people;
- Every local authority must have a VSH and Wiltshire was in the original pilot scheme in 2007 so this position has been in place for over 10 years;

Chris Whitfield, VSH, reported that the Virtual School would be buying in an ePEP package for next year and that a Governing Body for the Virtual School was well established. Panel members asked to receive an update from the Virtual School Governing Body at a future meeting.

5.5 CPP Meeting – 20 November 2018 – Councillor Jane Davies, Lead Member for *Strategic Priority 2 – “Continue to improve timeliness of permanency for looked after children across the range of permanency options”*

At the meeting, the following was highlighted;

- The Permanence Framework that is for the establishing of emotional permanence (attachment), physical permanence (stability) and legal permanence (the carer has parental responsibility for the child) which gives a child a sense of security, continuity, commitment and identity – a sense of “home” and belonging;
- Social work teams and how they work closely together to achieve permanence for a child;
- Clear planning and review process and how it is undertaken for a child and what this involves;
- Monitoring of progress and outcomes takes place and with whom the data collected is shared and discussed;
- Routes to permanence which include adoption, long term fostering or Orders such as a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) or Child Arrangement Order (CAO) or a return home;

It was confirmed that one of the FACT workstreams is focussing on reunification. When it is the plan that a child will return home, the voice of the child, parents and the views of foster carers on how this might work will be taken into account.

- Wiltshire’s Adoption Scorecard for 2014-17 (for which Wiltshire shows strong results in the three key areas);

During the 2015 Ofsted inspection they positively commented on the adoption results and performance has continued to improve since. It is anticipated that the implementation of Adoption West will help improve things further and members were assured that Wiltshire’s performance would not be negatively impacted by the results of the other authorities who were part of Adoption West (note: subsequent reporting and the Ofsted inspection of 2019 indicated that adoption performance has continued to improve for Wiltshire’s children.)

- Regular monitoring reports are prepared and provided for Cabinet in relation to adoption;

- Definition of a long-term placement is one which is intended to provide for a child until they are 18 plus – if all goes well it is hoped they would ‘stay put’ in foster care. Long term matches with Wiltshire approved foster carers are agreed at Foster Panel. If a child has to be placed with an agency foster carer they can still be long term matched if it is the right plan for the child. In this case, due diligence would apply and requests are approved by the Permanence Panel and then Foster Panel;
- If children are unable to live safely at home with parents, the next best option in terms of outcomes for the child may be a placement with extended family or close family friends for example – this would require a Special Guardianship Order or a Child Arrangement Order;
- In 2015-16, 29 SGOs were granted for Looked After Children (2 broke down). In 2016-17, 21 SGOs (1 broke down) and in 2017-18, 19 SGOs were granted. There is a support group for those holding SGOs and the children are invited to the Christmas party with their carers;
- It should always be considered whether a child can and should return home. Research shows that after leaving care many young adults do return home. So, the question should always be asked whether a return home is viable and safe;
- There is a lot of work going on as part of the FACT programme with the Sufficiency of Placements work stream, Reunification work stream and Kinship (Connected Persons) work stream;
- Placement stability, which can influence permanence, is measured by National Indicator 62 (placement stability: 3 or more placements during the year) which was 7% at end of Q2 (below current target range of 9-12%) and NI 63 (placement stability children whom have been looked after for more than 2 years and a half and have they been in the current placement for the last 2 years is currently 78% (Q2 2019.20) above our statistical neighbours and the national average
- In the Looked After Children review audit completed in January 2017 almost 79% of those children reviewed had a care plan which included a plan for permanence. Those without an up-to-date plan were followed up – this audit is due to be repeated;

The challenges faced are:

- i) Sufficiency of placements around fostering and adoption – *When the Corporate Parenting strategic priorities were reviewed, it was agreed that this priority should remain, transformational work is located within FACT.*
- ii) Assuring the breadth and flexibility of support around complex children – *Stronger Families (previously No Wrong Door) and strong partnership approach will help with this, especially with those children whom are hard to place.*

- iii) The implementation of Adoption West reflecting a period of change – *At the time of the review Adoption West had not gone live, so impact of changes could not be discussed. Ofsted provided positive feedback on outcomes from the adoption work following the inspection in June 2019.*
 - iv) Adoption West will not support Special Guardianship Order work previously held by the Adoption Team, so this work will transfer to the Fostering Team.
- 5.6 CPP Meeting – 29 January 2019 – Councillor Pauline Church, Lead Member for Strategic Priority 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”*

At the meeting, the following was highlighted:

Blair Keltie had retired in his role as Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) & Missing Children Service Manager and Andrea Brazier will be taking responsibility for this area of work and supporting Cllr Church with her strategic priority focus;

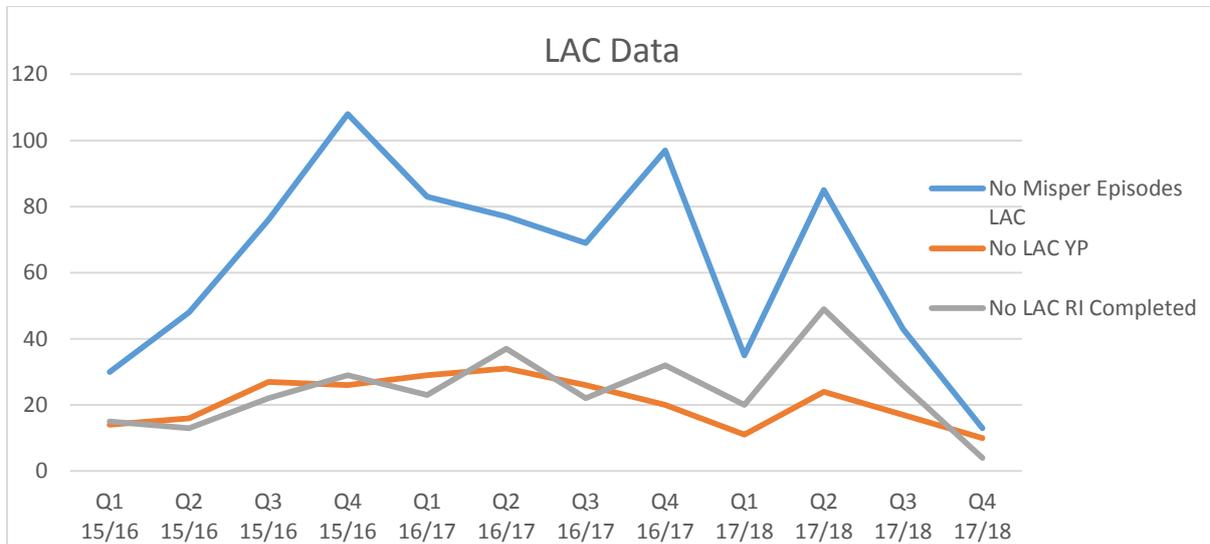
The Ofsted recommendations of what local authorities should do to prevent CSE includes:

- Ensuring that managers oversee all individual CSE cases and that plans are progressing appropriately
- Ensuring that every child returning from a missing episode is given a return interview and that information obtained should be centrally collated and used to inform and improve future operational and strategic activity
- Ensuring that schools and the Local Authority cross-reference absence information with risk assessments for individual Looked After Children and Young People
- Establishing a targeted preventative and self-protection programme on CSE for Looked After Children;

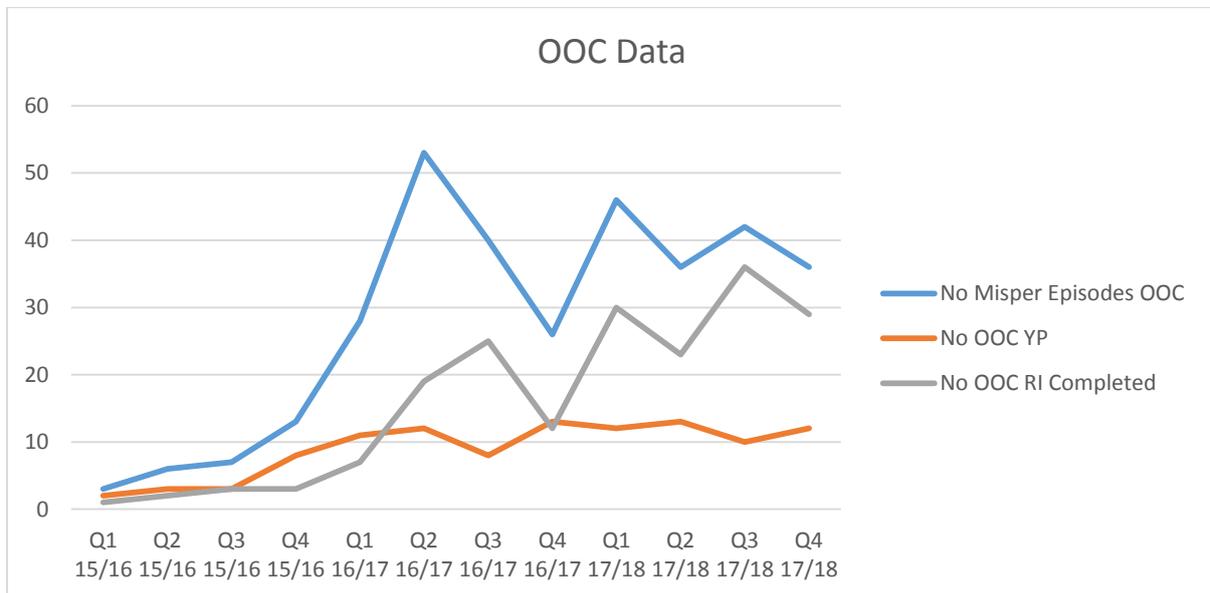
How the Council responds to Looked After Children who go missing includes:

- Robust communication with Wiltshire Police with reports being sent directly to Families and Children Service’s Missing Children Co-Ordinators (Karen Stokes and Mel Gillingham) to manage responses
- Systems of escalation as required
- The Missing Children Co-Ordinators track and monitor completion of Return Interviews
- The performance is monitored by the fortnightly Performance and Outcomes Group (POG)
- The information and data collated is analysed and reported in quarterly reports to the Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board superseded in 2019 by the Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership (SVPP), the Exploitation Sub Group (Of the Community Safety Partnership), senior managers and to the Corporate Parenting Panel;

A graph recording Looked After Children missing episodes from 2015/16 to 2017/18 showed evidence that responses to our children residing in Wiltshire is having a positive (trend) outcome with fewer missing incidents and more Return Interviews completed.



A graph recording our children residing out of county from 2015/16 to 2017/18 shows that our responses are improving but there is further room for improvement as the baseline was low.



Performance in relation to completion of missing return interviews is monitored quarterly. 76% were completed for the 21 young people living within Wiltshire reported missing in Q2 (and decline from 88% in Q1) and 74% for the 14 young people living outside of Wiltshire (an improvement from 48% in Q1).

There are a number of ways we are addressing outcomes for Looked After Children who go missing which include:

- Reviewing and understanding criteria of the most frequently missing children
- A risk-based approach to missing incidents and return interviews (assessing that although a child may not be where they are supposed to be at a certain time and are classed as “missing” it may be due to a missed curfew and it is known where they are, who they are with and if they are “at risk”)
- Police report direct to the Missing Children Co-Ordinators for children placed out of county
- Information is communicated for Looked After Children prior to placement starts and the responses made to the top missing incidents
- The need for standardised procedures – development of practice standards
- An update on national guidance (issued in 2014) to include resolving cross border issues where relevant information is not passed on/received
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable People’s Partnership is looking to map out CSE hotspots in the county
- CSE training for staff and for the dedicated Emerald Team.

Panel Members asked about County Lines – it was reported that there is a list of around 22 children who are thought to be involved with this and they are regularly discussed and monitored, but none of these are Looked After.

Return Interviews can be carried out face to face or online or via skype as appropriate. One of the issues faced is how “missing” is reported/recoded as there is a lack of standardisation of the definition of missing; that is differences between how Police and the Local Authority interpret it. The risk-based approach on deciding whether a Return Interview should be offered and completed is the best way of using the intelligence known.

Work is ongoing to reduce missing incidents and it was confirmed that information is shared with Foster Carers before and during placement and the nature of any risk is discussed (if known) by the carer’s Supervising Social Worker. E-Learning on CSE/Missing children is available for staff and Foster Carers to complete.

Councillor Church had previously suggested that a RAG risk rating be introduced to identify the Looked After Children that are the most vulnerable and Officers had reported that this information would not be easy to achieve and as a result the Panel now received more detailed information in the quarterly Missing Children reports that referred specifically to Looked After Children.

Councillor Church agreed to continue to explore the possibility of RAG risk rating and will liaise with Andrea Brazier about this so that all relevant teams are aware of, and can work together to help, the most vulnerable children and young people.

5.7 CPP Meeting – 19 March 2019 - Councillor Stewart Palmen, Lead Member for Strategic Priority 7 “*Ensure that looked after children and care leavers have timely and easy access to mental health services*”

At the meeting, the following was highlighted:

Those who might identify emotional and mental health issues in Looked After children and young people included:

- Foster Carers
- Medical Professionals during regular health assessments and via the completion of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs)
- School staff
- Social Workers
- Family Support Workers
- Other Agencies that come into contact with the Looked After Children
- Self recognition of issues

Once issues are identified this would lead to an assessment by a CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) Looked After Children Therapist.

Another channel of entry to support children could come via a GP referral or from an A&E department following a self-harming episode requiring treatment or hospital admission.

The CAMHS Looked After Children Therapist (Roger Duncan) can be used to bridge the gap between services. He has been in post for 2 years and supports Looked After Children in the following ways:

- By meeting with the Looked After Children nurses for a weekly team meeting
- By joining the weekly Emerald Team meetings with Lena Pheby (Looked After Children Nurse) to identify any Looked After Children at risk of CSE
- By joining the monthly Vulnerable Adolescent Contextual Safeguarding Panel (VACS – previously Risk Management Panel) with Lena Pheby to identify any Looked After Children who are considered at risk.

The CAMHS Looked After Children Therapist offers the following:

1. Assessment of Looked After Children's mental health needs and risk
2. Support for referrals to CAMHS
3. Short term therapy work for Looked After Children (10 cases)
4. Short term therapy work for Unaccompanied Young People (2 cases)

If further support is required after a set number of sessions the young person would be referred onto the CAMHS service. Currently there is only one CAMHS Looked After Children's Therapist, so capacity is limited. The CCG is carrying out a review of demand and capacity to identify the commissioning gaps.

It was confirmed that, where appropriate, Roger Duncan does work with young people if their application to CAMHS is declined and if support has been requested by the family.

The CCG reported that there had been less “bounce back” from the young people in the system since the CAMHS Looked After Children Therapist role had been introduced. Other support services are available including Kooth (on-line counselling). Between April 2018 and March 2019, an average of 4.5 referrals of Looked After Children have been accepted in the specialist CAMHS Service – with a range of between 2 and 8 each month. This does not take into account those accessing Services through staff embedded in other teams, such as schools or The Emerald Team.

It was reported that there are many life experiences that can lead to mental health problems and Looked After Children are more likely to have experienced them; and not addressing these issues can lead to mental health issues in the future:

Early Life Experiences or Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Witness to Domestic Violence
- Neglect
- Trauma (unaccompanied young people arising from events in their country of origin) leading to PTSD. Interpreters are often needed to find out about these issues.

There are issues with providing CAMHS support for Looked After Children and Care Experienced young people, as follows:

- CAMHS is a “brand” that some young people may not want to be associated with as there is a stigma attached to the word “mental”
- Family Care Workers offering outreach in other specialist areas are essential to provide support for those who don’t want to see a CAMHS therapist; children cannot be made to have CAMHS support
- Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) can be delayed, more often for children placed out of county
- SDQ scoring is sometimes not completed in a timely manner
- There is no quantitative data available to see how well we are doing.

Cllr Palmen shared his improvement suggestions as follows:

- Improve support for Unaccompanied Young people
 - *I am aware that recently funding has been secured for three levels of training that can support unaccompanied young people;*
- Recognise Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) early on and provide counselling and support quickly
 - *I feel this approach would benefit from multi-agency training and support including school as key front-line agencies.*

- Have quantitative measures of more than time for Initial Health Assessments.
- *This is now being addressed via the Looked After Children Health Board and review of IHA's led by the Clinical Commissioning Group.*
- Improve the CAMHS brand
 - *I am aware that recent changes in the CAMHS structure and establishment of the CAMHS Wiltshire Wellbeing team is currently addressing this.*
- Looking at the Panel's Strategic Priority – do we need to take the focus off “Timely Support” and onto “Preventative measures with correct support?”

Lucy Baker (CCG Commissioning) wished to assure the Panel that the reported issue of timeliness of IHAs had been picked up and work was being undertaken to make improvements. They were talking to colleagues in Islington who are high performers in timeliness of IHAs to find out what they do. Lucy also reported that national funding was coming and that they would be looking to make improvements early on in a young person's pathway.

Performance continues to be monitored and has been reported to the Safeguarding Vulnerable People's Partnership following the recommendation from the recent Ofsted inspection (June 2019) for improvement on:

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

65% of Initial Health assessments were completed within 28 days in Q1 2019/20, an improvement from 49% and 57% (Q1 & Q4 2018/19). Provisional data from Virgin Care indicates IHAs within 28 days is 67% for quarter 2 although this is currently being validated

Lena Pheby reported that they are considerate in the way they address and discuss emotional health issues when they are talking to young people to take away the “mental” stigma.

A Panel Member asked whether young people had to be in a “stable” placement before they could access the CAMHS service. If we are aware of a drug or alcohol issue, then we would recommend a referral for a Motiv8 session with hope that more would be provided.

Lucy Townsend (Director – Families and Children's Services) reported that Tracy Daszkiewicz (Director of Public Health) was leading on the core skills workstream under the FACT project which was looking at support for adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

A Panel Member asked if counselling should be offered to all children coming into care as standard?

Lucy Baker responded that workshop/play therapy is offered for younger children that come into care, particularly being available in school holidays so

that they can continue to receive support during those times. Outdoor based activities and forest walks and talks are sometimes appropriate for older children. Lucy confirmed that the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust are used for adult support and she offered to see if they would be able to extend their service to young people. Chris Whitfield (Virtual School Head) suggested that she and Lucy Baker could meet to discuss support further and that funding from the top sliced Pupil Premium could be used.

A Panel Member asked if Wiltshire currently use the NSPCC for support work. It was confirmed that they do, but that they carry out specialist work and that they have a long waiting list to access the service.

The Panel requested an update in six months with an update on progress and Councillor Palmen would look to propose new wording for Strategic Priority 7 to cover more than speed of access to CAMHS support.

5.8 CPP Meeting – 23 July 2019 - Councillor Pat Aves, Lead Member for Strategic Priority 3 “Ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for looked after children within Wiltshire which meets the needs of those children. Prioritise placement within Wiltshire”

At the meeting, the following was highlighted:

- Most accommodation for children in care is provided by foster carers (about 75%) and to achieve and maintain this we need to recruit more foster carers for the Council, living within Wiltshire who have suitable accommodation and skills. 47% (Q2 2019/20) of children live with Wiltshire Council approved foster carers. This is a priority focus for the Council and much work is being undertaken to increase foster carer recruitment and retention;
- That she had been thinking about what Councillors can do to help ensure that there are suitable foster carers and accommodation for our looked after children. Councillors need to recognise that we need a diverse range of carers and that it is preferable to have carers within Wiltshire (and approved by Wiltshire Council) so that the Teams don't have to use Independent Fostering Agencies to look after children. The children need to be near enough to their own families for contact and visits from their own Social Worker and to hopefully remain at the same school or college if appropriate to keep in touch with friends;
- The role of the Fostering Panel and that she was currently the only Councillor representative on the Panel and had been for the past 2 years and was obviously not able to attend all the panel meetings. Councillor Aves thought that, although it is not a requirement, it would be beneficial for there to be a Councillor representative at each Panel meeting and this would mean that new representatives would need to be appointed and that to gain greater diversity of membership that maybe male Councillors would be interested. She would continue to seek interest in other Councillor volunteers for this role and suggested that this could be raised at the full Council meeting in October 2019;

- If there were more serving Councillors on the Fostering Panel this would strengthen the insight into the role as a corporate parent and give opportunity to learn about the needs of children and foster carers that you otherwise may not have known about and Councillor Aves felt that it had made her a more useful Member and she had been able to suggest and instigate a few small changes to make improvements such as enhanced Staying Put payments to foster carers until the end of the summer term for young people completing their education at 18+;
- Councillor Aves felt that the retention of foster carers was extremely important and suggested ways in which this could be achieved along with other ideas for improvements:
- A large amount of the Council budget is spent on the care of our looked after children, but it is easily the least talked about at any full Council meeting so we all need to raise the profile of the Families and Children's Service in general and give all Councillors the opportunity to actively demonstrate their commitment to their role as corporate parent. During the last administration period only about 28 of the 98 Councillors completed the online training session on CSE. Councillor Aves felt that this training should be repeated and done as face to face course which would give an opportunity to ask questions which is important, and completion of the course could be highlighted in the Councillor's profile on the website;
- Other ways to encourage members of the public to become Wiltshire foster carers could be by way of continuing to use simple posters and leaflets in Town Halls, Parish Council noticeboards, social clubs, doctors' surgeries which people can think about/take away and consider. This would be alongside other recruitment activity through radio advertising and social media; and
- Another good audience would be via Area Boards with the possibility of Officers attending and giving an update and the need to recruit more foster carers. Not all Area Boards are as well attended as others and obviously Officer time may be an issue, but this could be considered as front-line Officers are usually best placed to get the important messages across. Information about fostering for Wiltshire has previously been provided to Area Boards and this is always worth repeating.

A Panel Member who is also currently a Foster Carer commented that people can be very daunted at Fostering Panel meetings, based upon her experience in another local authority, and due to the numbers of those present in the room it can be quite scary with the feeling that you are being strongly interrogated. Councillor Aves acknowledged that these meetings are formal but that those present do what they can to put the foster carers at ease and explain carefully what is going on. It was planned that in future there would be a short biography of each person present and their role so that this could be read by those attending before they come into the meeting room. Wiltshire Foster Panel asks for feedback from those attending and this reflects that Panel works hard to make applicants and carers feel welcomed.

A Panel Member asked if analysis is carried out as to how potential foster carer contacts are made in light of the ongoing recruitment drive and what is the most effective method. Jay Williams (Kinship and Fostering Team Manager) reported that whilst there was not one answer, word of mouth was important and whilst formal enquiries are coming in for example during June 2019 there were 21 enquiries (with 5 coming via the Global communications campaign) not all had progressed to the assessment stage and it was unlikely that the target of numbers of foster carers for October 2020 would not be met. Foster carers identifying and recommending others was identified as key and, for example as one strategy to try and increase recruitment, there would regular coffee mornings hosted to bring in more potential carers.

Several Panel Members expressed an interest in hosting a Fostering session at their respective Area Board meetings and Jay Williams agreed to investigate this further with this Team. This will be commencing early 2020.

5.9 Performance: 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 Q2 2019/20 (as at 30th September 2019). We are currently reviewing our in-year expected range and targets across all KPI's. Proposals have been drafted by the Performance Team in consultation with Heads of Service and the revised suite of KPI and target ranges were presented to SMT on 6 November and Performance and Outcomes Board on 13 November. The confirmed KPI's will now be incorporated into future iterations of this dataset and will 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.

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 2012 - 2019 (at 31st March each year)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Children	416	446	397	404	419	443	444	468

Proportion of children per 10,000 of the under 18 population between 2012 - 2019 (at 31st March each year)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Wiltshire	40	43	39	39	40	42.6	42.3	44.3
Statistical Neighbour	40	42	43	45.3	48	52	53	n/a
England	59	60	60	60	60	62	64	n/a

Number of children entering care by age

	2018/19		Q1 2019/20		Q2 2019/20	
	Children	%	Children	%	Children	%
Under 1	37	23%	6	12%	12	26%
1 - 4	18	11%	7	14%	14	30%
5 - 9	31	19%	13	27%	4	9%
10 - 15	44	27%	14	29%	12	26%
16+	32	20%	9	18%	5	11%
Total	162	100%	49	100%	47	100%

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

	Q3 18/19		Q4 18/19		Q1 19/20		Q2 19/20		England* (2018) %
	Children	%	Children	%	Children	%	Children	%	
Under 1	23	5%	28	6%	15	3%	19	4%	6%
1 - 4	54	11%	40	9%	41	9%	49	10%	13%
5 - 9	65	13%	69	15%	70	15%	62	13%	19%
10 - 15	197	41%	202	43%	202	44%	203	43%	39%
16+	145	30%	129	28%	132	29%	137	29%	23%
Total	484	100%	468	100%	460	100%	470	100%	100%

The recent commentary discussed at the CPP meeting on 12 November 2019 included:

1. Over the last 5 years the number and rate of children in care in Wiltshire has increased from a low base. Despite this, the Wiltshire rate of 44 per 10,000 remains below statistical neighbours (53 per 10,000), other 'good' local authorities (52 per 10,000) and significantly below the England average (64 per 10,000).
2. 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. 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 LAC), and national, local and strategic intelligence (including from FACT, Support and Safeguarding Service (SASS) evaluation, POG and POB) suggest we are likely to see our children in care numbers rise annually by 14-17 each year until 2023.
3. The age profile of children in care is in line with the England profile.
4. The placement profile is also in line with the England profile with 77% of children placed with foster carers. However only 46% of these children are

placed with Wiltshire Council carers and currently 36 children (7%) are placed in children's homes. While the percentage of children placed in children's homes is in-line with statistical neighbours this is higher than we would anticipate and does create additional financial pressure. A fostering transformation plan (Fostering Excellence) has been approved by SMT and is now in development. 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.

5. 89% of reviews for children in care were held in timescale and 88% included the views of children. Contemporary benchmarking data is not available, a request has been made via the regional data leads network for south west local authorities to share performance data, once received this can be incorporated into our internal reports. Scrutiny of late reviews shows that a further 6% of reviews were held within timescale but reports were not completed on Liquid Logic in time to count as a positive measure. Exceptions reports are provided to the Service Manager who monitors all late reviews. Participation of children in reviews has been discussed as an issue with Independent Reviewing Officers during their last team meeting, this revealed inconsistent practice. Additional guidance is being written and will lead to greater consistency.
6. Distant placements. The percentage of our children who are placed outside of Wiltshire at 28% 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 37% we are significantly above both SN (26%) and England average (27%). The percentage of children placed at distance is above our end of year target. 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.
7. 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, SN and SN who are 'good'. 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 78% is also better than the England average, SN and SN 'good'. 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.
8. Visits – overall the improvements in the timeliness of visits to our children in care has been maintained throughout Q2 with 92% of visits being in time and

performance is now good. The range across teams is 98% to 84% and so room for improvement does remain and will continue to be a feature examined within Performance and Outcome Groups. Critically Children in Care South had 65 (13%) late visits in Quarter 2, detailed analysis and improvement actions will be examined during the team performance review.

9. Private Fostering - 22 new private fostering notifications were received in the quarter. The majority of these came from language schools and were expected. 21 of the 22 notifications were responded to with a social work visit within 7 days. The one late visit occurred on Day 8, this was the earliest date a visit could be arranged, no concerns were identified on assessment and this child is no longer subject to Private Fostering.
10. Adoption - Numbers adopted and adopted within 12 months of Should Be Placed for Adoption (SBPA) both performed below expectation in Q2. However, numbers of children in this cohort are very small so any change, even small, will have a significant impact on performance. Current half-year performance shows 14 adoptions and pipeline adoptions for the remaining half year are currently at 16. This results in a total of 30 forecasted adoptions for the full year which is comfortably within the expected range.
 - Priorities for the next period include:
 - Managing the number of children in care to slow the increase
 - 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

5.10 Review of Strategic Priorities

At the Panel meeting in September the Chair reported that she had reviewed the Strategic Priorities in advance of the meeting and had suggested that as there are 8 Panel Members that another strategic priority could be added so that each Member was responsible for one each. As there is strong focus on increasing Foster Carers, this should also be a priority for the Panel and that it should be added as priority number 8. It was anticipated that each Member would work with their support Officer to draw up an Action Plan of how they could progress their strategic priority. Councillors could then be invited to attend relevant operational meetings and/or team meetings to gain more insight and understanding.

The Chair also wanted to discuss the Strategic Priorities with the representatives of the Children in Care Council to seek their views and if they had thoughts on a focus of their way forward. This would be arranged and

following this it was likely that the Strategic Priorities would be refreshed and reassigned for the Panel Members to progress.

6. Ofsted Inspection

6.1 Between 3 and 19 June 2019, the Families and Children's Service was inspected by Ofsted. There are four domains that are graded and the outcome for the Service was as follows:

- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families – Good
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection – Good
- The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers – Good
- Overall Effectiveness - Good

6.2 This is an endorsement of the effective services that are in place and delivered to children and young people, their families and carers who come from, and are living in, living in Wiltshire. There were five things that were 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.

6.3 It is important to note that these are areas for improvement, not formal recommendations of which there were none. Some of these areas are general to the Service whilst others are more specific to the work of the CPP. There will be an improvement plan developed following the inspection and it will include actions designed to tackle the factors identified above, with the intention of the local authority being judged as Outstanding when it is next inspected.

6.4 The following extracts are taken from the Ofsted report. Members are encouraged to read the whole document:

- Children in care and care leavers receive a good service in Wiltshire. The vast majority...live in stable, permanent homes that meet their needs. Social workers and Personal Advisors (PAs) know the children and young people well, visit them regularly and build meaningful relationships with them. Tenacious social work and advocacy ensure that children's views are pivotal in plans for their future, and their experience and progress improve once they are in care
- Children are seen and the majority are seen alone by their social workers...have a good relationship with their social workers...
- Children and young people have regular visits with their family and other people who are important to them whenever possible

- The majority of children’s assessments...are of a good quality, with children’s wishes and feelings carefully considered. Some social workers write in the first person. These children’s records are child-friendly...bring the child to life and evidence a real sense of care
- Since the last inspection, meeting children’s health needs has improved...challenges remain in ensuring that all children benefit from a timely...health assessment
- There is careful oversight of children’s journeys to permanence, underpinned by sensitive, child-centred work. A wide range of options are pursued....
- The majority of children in care...live with foster carers on a long term basis. The stability of these placements is good, and most children stay in the same place once they come into care
- The arrangements for finding...adoptive parents are a strength. The new relationship with Adoption West...is working well and has been seamless for both children and carers
- Children who arrive as unaccompanied minors are promptly safeguarded.... specialist social workers...have responded well to the complexities of safeguarding these children
- For care leavers there is tenacious work by Personal Advisers and young people value their support

In providing this flavour of the positive report, it is recognised that there are areas of improvement identified including the consistency of assessment, educational attainment and the consistency of health assessments. However, this inspection is strong evidence of the effectiveness of the Service.

7. Impact and Ambition

7.1 It is clear that this group has received information about a breadth of activity relating to Wiltshire’s children in care and care experienced young people, “our” children. 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:

- There is an established and still evolving Care Council and Care Leavers Council 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 consider “dashboard” information relating to all responsibilities of the Families and Children’s Service which allows them to question officers about effectiveness, celebrate success and raise awareness across the Council.

- There is scrutiny and challenge regarding the identified priority areas. Mainly through exception reporting and the use of service area Key Performance Indicators, this allows members to understand the effectiveness of the organisation and to ensure that areas for improvement are identified and, where required, appropriate actions are identified and completed. For example, the ePEP process has been introduced and embedded which simplifies the PEP process for children with the aim of improving educational outcomes.
- 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.
- The risk assessment process associated with missing children has been improved and there is closer working practice with foster carers.
- There are improving responses available from CAMHS for children and young people experiencing mental health difficulties including a reduction of children “returning” to CAMHS for a subsequent time.
- There is engagement with all members, driven by the lead member, of the importance of a whole council approach to the recruitment of foster carers for children in care. Members have been provided with information and have been asked to promote the importance of fostering within the scope of their roles.
- 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 over time.

7.2 It is important that there is no complacency about ensuring that 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
- Provide a comprehensive and innovative care offer to care experienced young people that is based upon what they say they want. 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 all outcomes for this group of children and young people: improve educational outcomes 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.

8. Conclusion and Next Steps

8.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel has been challenged in past years to fully evidence its impact, this was reported in the 2015-16 CPP annual report. The introduction of a new Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2016-17, with new strategic priorities and an enhanced reporting system has helped to ensure greater impact by panel as evidenced in the updates from strategic leads contained within this report. Alongside this is the evidence within the report from the Children in Care council. Following the change of chairing responsibility and the outcome of the Ofsted inspection that the Families and Children's Service in Wiltshire is Good, there is now further opportunity for the effectiveness of the CPP to develop, supported by robust dataset and key performance indicator reporting, and for its impact to be even more significant. In addition, we will:

- a) Review all priority areas to ensure the best impact upon outcomes for children and young people. These are currently in draft as follows:

Proposed Promise/Commitment/Priorities for CPP

I need:

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.
2. Support for as long as I need it.
3. To feel and be safe.
4. To be heard – my voice is not the only way I am heard, it may come out as my behaviour.
5. Support with my mental health especially at school, at a time and a place that suits me and not services.
6. Support to be the best I can.

7. Support to be healthy and this includes opportunities to be involved in new activities.
 8. A loving home where I have good relationships, respect and the opportunity to see my family.
- b) Strengthen member representation on the Fostering Panel. This has already been achieved by appointing Councillor Stewart Palmen to the Panel.
 - c) 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.
 - d) By promoting the importance of fostering and providing information and opportunities to discuss routes into fostering, support the increase the number of Foster Carers available for Wiltshire children, supporting them to remain living in their home communities and achieving stability. Meetings are currently being planned with Area Boards for 2020 to support the new Fostering Excellence initiative.
 - e) Working with health colleagues, continue to track the improvement in health outcomes for children and young people, particularly by ensuring that Initial and Review Health assessments are completed in a timely way. Improvement is already evident following revision of process.
 - f) Further strengthen and develop the offer for care experienced young people, particularly ensuring that those living outside Wiltshire are not disadvantaged.

9. Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel

- 9.1 The Safeguarding Children and Young People Panel (SCYPP) (which was established in February 2014) has continued to meet in July, September and November 2018 and March, July and September 2019. 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.
- 9.2 Councillors Pat Aves, Mary Champion, Jane Davies (Vice Chair), Mary Douglas, Ross Henning, George Jeans and Laura Mayes (Chairman) formed the membership of the Panel during the period May 2018 to May 2019. From July 2019 Councillor Laura Mayes stepped down from Panel having changed Cabinet Member responsibility and she was succeeded by Councillor Pauline Church as the Chair. The Lead Officer is Jen Salter (Head of Service – Support and Safeguarding).
- 9.3 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.

9.4 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, a discussion about the self-assessment that was prepared prior to the Ofsted annual conversation meeting, what improvements were put in place following an internal audit on child sexual abuse, the findings from an independent peer review, an overview of the Wiltshire Obesity Strategy for 2016/20, a briefing on County Lines, timeliness of assessments, details of the current pressures facing the service and anonymised case studies that show the threshold levels.

10. Main Considerations for the Council

10.1 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.

11. Safeguarding Implications

11.1 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.

12. Public Health Implications

12.1 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.

13. Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

13.1 Not applicable.

14. Equalities Impact of the Proposal

14.1 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.

15. Risk Assessment

15.1 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.

16. Financial Implications

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

17. Legal Implications

17.1 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 (Executive Director – Children and Education) is the lead decision maker.

18. Proposal

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

Lucy Townsend (Director - Families and Children's Services)

Report Author: Deborah Barlow (Interim Head of Service - Children in Care and Young People)

Date of report: 15 November 2019

Background Papers – None

Appendices

1 - Annual Report of the Children in Care Council April 2018 to March 2019