

**Extract from the notes of the Children’s Select Committee – Standing Task Group (reports), Monday 26 June 2023.**

**Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) – draft report for full council**

1. The task group reviewed the draft report in depth and would like to offer the following suggestions in a bid to further strengthen the CPP (Corporate Parenting Panel) annual report [thereafter referred to as the annual report or report].
2. This is to ensure that the work of the CPP, and outcomes achieved, are presented as strongly as possible to full council, as well as ensuring that the report is entirely “stand alone” and accessible to lay readers.

Overall comment

3. The task group recognised the complexity in balancing the information in the report; presenting a year’s worth of work, based on complex data sets, with adequate but focused narrative to make it accessible to all readers, all the while ensuring anonymity for the young people concerned.
4. The task group welcomed the structure of the report and noted the progress made in recent years to develop it.
5. However, the task group also highlighted concerns which are reflected in the suggestions below. The task group recognised that part of these concerns will be because this is an unfamiliar topic matter and a scrutineer’s focus will be on numbers and data to support the evidence presented in the unfamiliar narrative.
6. The task group believed that the CPP was dedicated to its purpose and working through a significant workload both physically (in terms of the amount of reports and data considered through the year) and emotionally (in terms of the topic matter and each councillor’s Corporate Parent’s responsibility for these children), but was concerned about some of the discrepancies, and disconnect, between the data and the narrative.

Positives

7. The task group noted the implementation of many of the suggestions it had made when it previously considered the CPP annual report on 22 September 2021 and 10 January 2023:
  - a. The addition of “per 10,000” when relevant on the data to support contextualisation;
  - b. The inclusion of national and comparator authorities comparison as well as trends for past years where available;
  - c. listing the reports considered and information received by the CPP under the 8 categories of data, with cross-reference to the CPP’s priorities

- d. including school attendance rates;
- e. offering opportunities for councillors to visit Canons House to retain their involvement with Section 47 inspections;
- f. adequately highlighting the work delivered by the Youth Voice Team;
- g. giving consideration to increasing the number of young people involved with the Children in Care Council (27 new members).

## Suggestions

- 8. **Glossary** - it was suggested that a glossary be included with the CPP annual report. This would include abbreviations, acronyms and brief definitions of terms that are used for a very specific purpose in this context (for example “missing”, “reunification home”, “voluntarily accommodated”, “house of multiple occupancy”, etc.). Separating these explanations from the report ensures that the report remains a manageable length whilst ensuring accessibility for lay readers.
- 9. **Accessibility** – the task group invited consideration of a one page executive summary or infographic that would highlight the key figures within the report. This would enable councillors to have a single overview of their Corporate Parent responsibilities in so far as the number of children in care, their age grouping, accommodation types, length of time in care, etc.
- 10. **Briefing** – the task group invited an online briefing for the chair and vice-chair of the Children’s Select Committee (open to all its members) on the implementation of placement sufficiency strategy and action plan. This would also include an update on the Mockingbird project (programme to support foster carers’ resilience).

This was agreed by officers and will be scheduled for mid to late January 2024.

- 11. **Developing the narrative** – there were areas where the task group felt that additional information provided in the narrative would answer potential questions:
  - a. to ensure that consideration of “stability and permanence” is reflected in the reports / updates table (paragraph 3.2);
  - b. to ensure that for “ceasing to be looked after” the data in the table at 6.2 can be reconciled with the narrative in paragraph 6.8 [*amendments made*]
  - c. children with 3 or more moves (paragraph 6.12) – a brief overview of the reasons that could be behind these moves, as a move could be positive (more appropriate / longer-term placement identified) [*amendments made*];
  - d. ending of residential placements (paragraph 6.16 - nationally seeing a shift in shorter notice periods being served for more complex young people) add some reassurance on what happened to these young people (e.g. placements found); [*amendments made*]

- e. to review the phrasing in paragraph 6.19 “10 young people have returned home to the care of their parents under placement with parent regulations, 5 of which were planned and in line with reunification plans” as it leaves the paragraph open to interpretation (i.e. where the other 5 “unplanned” reunification home?). [*amendments made*]
- f. to clarify whether the numbers used in paragraph 6.24 and the tables below it refers to the number of children for whom missing episodes have been reported or to the number of missing episodes. [*amendments made*]
- g. Clarify that connected carers receive the same support and benefits as foster carers (paragraph 6.22). [*amendments made*]
- h. It may be worth highlighting the reasons why Wiltshire is performing higher than local and outstanding local authorities average with regards to stability (paragraph 6.15).
- i. Clarifying whether the CPP will delve deeper into some of the information provided by attendees of the Children in Care Council (paragraph 9.8), 20% who reported not being in a loving home and 40% uncertain about their local community connections.

12. **Clarifying the data** – as a topic explored only once a year in such depth by most councillors it felt crucial to the task group that the information is as transparent, accessible, and reliable as possible, including trends where relevant to enable the readers to clearly identify improvements or developing issues. This would apply to the following:

- a. Overall - include some information on how the expected ranges are determined as this underpins reassurance on performance (this may be complex and may be best included in the glossary).
- b. For voluntarily accommodated (paragraph 2.2) to add year-on-year comparison.
- c. To review or separate the information in paragraph 6.4 to offer more clarity as the numbers in the paragraph do not completely align with the numbers in the table at paragraph 6.2.
- d. The “% of children looked after for more than 2.5 years and in placement for at least 2 years” is showing as **lower than expected range** for Q2, Q3 and Q4 for 2022-23 in the tables in paragraph 6.14. But that stability rate is then compared favourably to the south west region and nationally in paragraph 6.15 which refers to 2020-21 data.
- e. Paragraph 6.24 splits data for missing episodes between “in county” and “out of county” but the numbers do not add up to the total shown for the period (e.g. 38 out of county and 39 out of county but 81 in total for Q2 in 21-22). The total expected ranges (90 to 120) also do not match when

adding the expected ranges shown for “in county” and “out of county” (30 + 15 and 60+45).

- f. Paragraph 6.20 stated that “overall incidents of missing are reduced” but the latest quarter shown (Q4 22-23, with 71 episodes) was the highest recorded since Q2 21-22 (81 episodes).

**13. Deep dive into the data** – the task group welcomed the offer from officers to invite a data analyst to attend when the task group next considers the CPP annual report. The task group hoped this would help with 11.a above (explaining how the expected ranges are determined) and to support officers in selecting the data that best illustrates and support the narrative within the report and presenting that data in the clearest manner.

### Future scrutiny

14. The task group identified areas it wished to check back on when considering the next annual report:
  - a. Reunification home as increased consideration was given to this option (paragraph 6.8) – is this increase consideration reflected in the number of reunification home?
  - b. The development of comparator data and / or how the council is collating data for “% of CLA in care 18+ months who are not in long term arrangements”.
  - c. Children placed with our in house foster carers (less over the last year at 39%) and the council’s ambitious target of 65%.
  - d. Measuring of the success of the roll out of trauma informed practice for schools (Five to Thrive) (paragraph 6.35).
  - e. Outcome of the Bright Spot survey (paragraph 9.8).
  - f. Improvements on the long-standing issue of significantly below target numbers for health assessments and dental checks, and the impact of the new Portals system (paragraphs 10.7-10.9)

### Addendum

Amendments were made to the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) annual report following the meeting of the Standing Task Group. Paragraph numbers in this document have been amended to match the paragraphs in the updated CPP report. It should be noted that the findings of the Standing Task Group have not been amended but it was highlighted with “[*amendments made*]” when changes had been made to the CPP report. This is because it would be for the Children’s Select Committee to determine whether the recommendations from the Standing Task Group have been implemented in the CPP report as now circulated. This would then be reflected when the CPP report is presented to Full Council.