

Wiltshire Council

Annual Council

13 May 2014

Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel
June 2013 to May 2014

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 The Panel comprises 12 Members as nominated by Group Leaders:

Councillors Pat Aves, Andrew Davis (Vice Chairman), Jon Hubbard, Jacqui Lay, Alan MacRae (Chairman), Helen Osborn, Sheila Parker, Pip Ridout, Ricky Rogers, Ian Thorn, Bridget Wayman and Philip Whalley.

During the period May 2013 to May 2014, Councillor Alan MacRae was Chairman.

- 2.3 The Lead Officer is Karen Reid (Virtual School Headteacher).

- 2.4 The meetings were regularly attended by the following Officers:

James Dunne (Designated Nurse for Looked after Children), Fiona Fitzpatrick (Interim Service Director for Children and Families and Integrated Youth Service), Damian Haasjes (Voluntary Sector Youth Development Co-Ordinator), Lin Hitchman (Head of Children in Care), Dr Stuart Murray (Designated Doctor for Looked After Children) and Karen Reid (Virtual School Headteacher). Other Officers attended as required to present particular reports.

- 2.5 All Councillors have received an enhanced DBS check and the majority of members on the CPP have now completed the specialist Total Respect training which is co-facilitated by both adult and young trainers. The young trainers are all care experienced and have all completed the Open College Network (OCN) accredited 'Train the Trainers' course. The course aims to

raise awareness of the issues faced by children and young people in care and to promote their involvement in all aspects of social care. In addition a number of Panel Members have completed an on line training module in raise awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation issues.

2.6 Each member of the Panel has access to a range of publications prepared by the National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) and hard copies of these are available to read within the Democratic Services team.

2.7 All Panel members are invited to attend events involving Looked After Children and Young People, which take place throughout the year. These have included the STAR (Successful, Talented, Achievement, Recognition) Awards.

2.8 The Panel has considered reports on:

- The Child's Journey – Part 1. This included:
 - How are children received into care
 - The court process and permanency planning
 - Wiltshire Fostering service
- Briefing/update on Child Sexual Exploitation
- Wiltshire Independent Visitor Scheme – Review of Service
- Annual Report on the health of Looked After Children
- The Child's Journey – Part 2. This included:
 - Flowchart showing the child's journey through the system
 - The health of Looked After Children
- Overview of new Ofsted Inspection Framework for Looked After Children
- Private Fostering
- The Child's Journey – Part 3. This included:
 - Education of Looked After Children
 - Placements
 - Adoption

2.9 There is a consistently high level of attendance and engagement by Councillors at the CPP meetings with a strong commitment to improving the services Wiltshire Council provides for its Looked After Children and Young People.

2.10 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 Corporate Parenting Panel are invited to attend

with the officer to carry out the visit. Between June 2013 and May 2014, five Councillors have attended as part of the unannounced inspections.

- 2.11 Cllr MacRae, as Chairman of the Panel has attended Passport to Parliament meetings in Exeter and Bristol with young people from the Children in Care Council.

3. Special Events

STAR Awards

- 3.1 A number of Corporate Parenting Panel members attended the STAR Awards for Looked After Young People from 11-16 years, at the Salisbury City Hall on 4 April 2014.
- 3.2 There were nominations for 121 young people from a range of professionals and a total of 424 awards. About 50 young people were able to attend the prestigious event to receive their certificates, vouchers and STAR trophies along with their guests.
- 3.3 The awards were presented by Councillors Andrew Davis, Alan MacRae, Laura Mayes and Pip Ridout alongside Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director and Director Children's Services. Stephanie Millward, 2012 Paralympic Silver 4 times medal winner and 2013 IPC World Championships 4 times Gold and 1 Silver medal winner also presented awards and had photographs taken with the young people.
- 3.4 Two Care Leavers who currently attend university came to present awards and one of the young people addressed the audience of secondary aged young people, their carers, social workers and family members about her own experience in care and appealed to the young people in the audience to make the most of the opportunities they have to be successful.
- 3.5 There were 47 categories of Awards, reflecting a wide range of achievement, such as: Excellent Attendance at School; Participation in Virtual School Activities; Overcoming Challenges; Focus and Perseverance; Transition to new School, Presenting to an Adult Audience, amongst others.
- 3.6 The STAR Children's event for primary aged children, was also a huge success and took place at The Trowbridge Rugby Club on 10 April 2014 with approximately 170 children and supporting adults in attendance.
- 3.7 Jane Scott, Leader of the Council, together with Councillors Andrew Davis, Jon Hubbard, Laura Mayes and Pip Ridout from the Corporate Parenting Panel gave out the prizes alongside Stephanie Millward. Councillor Alan MacRae was the Announcer for the event.
- 3.8 The event was also supported by Dr Carlton Brand, Corporate Director together with the following Associate Directors – Julia Cramp (Quality Assurance, Commissioning and Performance, School and Early Years

Effectiveness) Ian Gibbons (Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) including Local Land Charges, Elections and Parvis Khansari (Highways and Transport).

- 3.9 The theme was Easter and the children took part in craft activities, decorating Easter chickens and bunnies to show off in the Easter Parade at the end of the afternoon. Everyone was entertained by Jamma de Samba and the children joined in the samba drumming out on the rugby pitch!

Capita Conference

- 3.10 Karen Reid, Virtual School Headteacher was asked to present at a national conference in London in October 2013 about the work of the Virtual School in Wiltshire. Karen took with her a young person, Tara Hall who is a member of the Children in Care Council and Tara spoke most eloquently to an audience of Ofsted inspectors, Chief Executives, virtual headteachers, amongst others about her journey through care, her previous non-engagement with education and her new commitment to her education pathway. Tara received the highest score of all the speakers at the conference!

Children in Care Council

- 3.11 The Children in Care Council meets on a regular basis and the members link with the CPP through the Shared Guardian Sessions.
- 3.12 The Children in Care Council have prepared an annual report of their work and this is attached as Appendix A to this report.
- 3.13 The Promise is the commitment of the CPP to the Looked After Children and Young People and was drawn up through a consultation event with the Young People of the Children in Care Council. (See Appendix B – The Promise).

CPP Meeting Format

- 3.14 The split format of our meetings continues to work well, with Panel meeting to discuss major items and review indicators of performance in the formal part of the meeting, before the Shared Guardian Session, led by young people. However, we continue to make improvements. For example, we have recently altered the running order of the agenda, moving the routine data to later in the meeting, which allows sufficient time for information and debate on the major items.
- 3.15 The formal part of the Panel meetings is designed so that Councillors receive reports from Officers covering the whole range of issues and aspects of the Care system. Performance data, service provision, plans for improvement and feedback from young people are the means by which Panel members are able to advise on further developments and improvements. Recent topics have included: education and those not in education, employment or training; health; placements; adoption; fostering; the Ofsted process and the transition to adult services.

- 3.16 These major items are now themed and tied in with the Shared Guardian Sessions. Major themes are planned in advance and relevant officers prepare reports or deliver presentations, with additional attendees as appropriate.
- 3.17 Panel meetings are planned through pre-meetings between the Chairman of CPP, and Lead Officer to ensure that Officers' reports are checked and signed off, the agenda is confirmed with all relevant parties and pre-brief sessions highlight any particular items for celebration and or challenge at the Panel meetings. Another recent innovation is the involvement of our Young people in this part of the process. A member of the Children in Care Council is now invited to take part in these planning meetings, which helps ensure the panel looks at areas of concern for our young people, and helps to tie-in with the Shared Guardian sessions.
- 3.18 Shared Guardian Sessions have covered the following topics:
- The Child's Experience
 - Placements
 - Care Leavers' Charter
 - Health.
- 3.19 Approximately 15 young people have contributed to a Shared Guardian Session over the past year.
- 3.20 The Care2Work Plan, awarded the National Care Advisory Service Quality Mark in January 2012, is almost completed. A number of initiatives have resulted in an increased offer of work experience placements; traineeships and engagement in further training of Care Leavers. A new action plan will be developed over the summer for implementation in the autumn.

4. Further Developments

- 4.1 It is the aim of the CPP to ensure that all Councillors are aware of their responsibility as corporate parents to Wiltshire's Looked After Children and Young People. In order to fulfil their role, Councillors are expected to participate in the Total Respect training programme, which has been condensed for this purpose, to one day. (See Appendix C - Extract from the Council's Constitution - Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors in relation to Corporate Parenting).
- 4.2 It is expected that Councillors attend the Shared Guardian Sessions relevant to their area of responsibility, in order that they are directly involved in the discussions about issues affecting Looked After Children and Young People and can be part of the solutions and improvements. In our forward work programme there will be broad themes listed and other members are welcome to attend any meeting which would be of interest to them.
- 4.3 It is planned that the number and age range of the young people attending the Shared Guardian Sessions will increase again over the coming year.

In conclusion:

- 4.4 The new way of working within the CPP has significantly heightened the input from young people in shaping and improving the services they receive.

5. Main Considerations for the Council

- 5.1 The Council is asked to note the work of the CPP to date and to become involved in the meetings in their role as Corporate Parents.

6. Safeguarding Implications

- 6.1 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.

7. Public Health Implications

- 7.1 Not applicable.

8. Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

- 8.1 Not applicable.

9. Equalities Impact of the Proposal

- 9.1 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.

10. Risk Assessment

- 10.1 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.

11. Financial Implications

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

12. Legal Implications

- 12.1 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.

13. Proposal

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

Carolyn Godfrey (Corporate Director)

Report Author: Karen Reid (Virtual School Headteacher)

Date of report: 28 April 2014

Background Papers

None

Appendices

Appendix A: Wiltshire's Children in Care Council Annual Report 2013/14
Appendix B: The Promise
Appendix C: Extract from Part 12 of the Council's Constitution – Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors in relation to Corporate Parenting

Wiltshire's Children in Care Council Annual Report 2013-14

Demographic:

- 14 young people aged 14 – 22 have been active participants of the CiCC during 2013-14.
- Participants are from various locations spread across the county from Ludgershall to Wootton Bassett.
- Each participant is either in care or has been in care:
 - 2 are living in supported residential accommodation of some sort.
 - 6 are living with Foster Carers.
 - 5 are with After Care and are in independent living.
 - 1 is no longer in After Care.

An additional four young people will be attending the next meeting.

Consultations:

All Party Parliamentary Group Entitlement Survey:

CiCC contributed to this national survey that explored LAC awareness of their entitlements. CiCC members in Wiltshire are very well informed with regards to their entitlements.

Children's Services Audit:

The group considered the findings of this audit of children and young people's experiences of Children's Services in Wiltshire and decided how the Voice and Influence team manager should best feed the findings back to Corporate Parents. They felt that it is important that young people are involved in decision making at all stages and that social workers take time to build relationships with them.

Wiltshire Substance Misuse Strategy:

The group felt that when considering substance misuse you have to consider what users may be trying to block out with their substance misuse. They felt that all young people should have easy access to information about drugs and help should be readily available if they chose to misuse a substance.

Wiltshire Young People's Health Consultation:

The group felt health should be considered holistically and that good quality of life (good relationships etc) is a key factor in being healthy.

Positive Activities Review Consultation:

CiCC had a focus group discussion on this and 2 members also attended a Scrutiny Meeting to discuss the issue further.

16-25 Accommodation Strategy Consultation:

Young people from CiCC also responded to the Accommodation Strategy as individual respondents. They shared their thoughts on what their ideal accommodation would be like, the kind of support that young people need and the problems that can arise when you move on to independent accommodation.

Sexual Health and Teenage Pregnancy Consultation:

The group felt that schools generally do a poor job of Sex and Relationships education but family and foster carers can be a good source of information. They felt that although group work can be helpful, ultimately people make their own decisions for a range of reasons.

Training and Interview Panels:

CiCC members continue to develop and lead training, contributing to Skills to Foster and Total Respects Training as well as looking at developing training for Designated Teachers and Personal Assistants (PA's).

They have also been on several interview panels over the past year.

In February half term 6 young people attended a 2 day A Team Train the Trainers course to enable them to be more involved in training and interview panels. The training went well and the young people are looking forward to getting to work.

They will be delivering a tailored one day Total Respects training course to social work students at Trowbridge College in April. CiCC members will also be involved in the upcoming interviews for heads of service.

Representation at meetings and events:

A CiCC member is a named representative at Wiltshire Safeguarding Children's Board (WSCB) and also contributed to the recent Sexual Exploitation Conference. Young people have attended 3 regional CiCC events, giving LAC in Wiltshire a voice and learning about ways that we can improve the way we work.

In October 5 members of CiCC travelled to London to visit the Houses of Parliament. They had a guided tour of the House of Lords. All involved enjoyed the day and found it educational. For some of the group it was their first experience of visiting central London and travelling on the tube as well as an opportunity to learn more about democracy. Many thanks to Alan MacRae for organising the tour.

Corporate Parenting Panel:

Young people have run a session on the work of PA's. There was interesting discussion about the kind of support young people need when they are moving towards independence and what makes a good helper. We look forward to seeing progress on some of the ideas that came up in that session.

Unfortunately, two Shared Guardianship Sessions have had to be cancelled due to bereavements but plans are in place for CiCC members to run future sessions.

Visitors to CiCC

James Dunne, Lucy Kitchener and Carolyn Godfrey have all participated in CiCC meetings. The young people enjoy having visitors and being able to speak directly to decision makers.

Carolyn's visit resulted in young people being invited to be involved in interviews for the new Heads of Service. She also agreed to look into a tree in memory of Phil Watts and that training for PA's by CiCC should go ahead. Carolyn would also have Housing put on the agenda of the Corporate Meeting as it was an issue that several young people raised. CiCC look forward to working more on these issues.

Plans for the future:

In the coming year we hope to:

- Carry out a review of the past year and create a plan for the coming one.
- Write the Positive Activities section of the LAC Improvement Plan.
- Develop a leaflet and/ or a training session on sexual exploitation for use in schools. We intend that this will be a partnership approach, working closely with WSCB, Healthy Schools and Wiltshire Young Commissioners. Create training for designated teachers and PA's
- Give young people more control over running CiCC meetings and CiCC budget.
- Identify positive ways for older CiCC members to be involved in the work of Wiltshire Council. For example, doing voluntary work experience with the Voice and Influence Team with the hope of them then developing the skills needed to move into permanent full time work
- Increase use of the CiCC Facebook page and improve our internet presence including Sparksite and the Wiltshire Council Website
- Most importantly continue to identify and work with CiCC members individual strengths to help them give LAC in Wiltshire a stronger voice.

Children in Care Council for LAC aged 7-11 and young people with special needs (ChiCC)

There have been 3 successful ChiCC meetings in the last year with between 6 and 9 boys and girls attending each one. Besides doing fun activities the group participated in the health consultation and discussed what an ideal social worker would be like.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers

We have had 2 very positive meetings with young male asylum seekers living across the county. The meetings have a strong social element as they rarely get to meet other young people in a similar situation. The group participated in the Entitlements Enquiry and Health Consultations.

An issue relating to funding for asylum appeals was taken back to the main CiCC who agreed that it should be looked at further.

One of the group took part in the A Team Train the Trainer course.

The Promise

We Promise:

Being in Care

- A choice of when to move on from care.
- To try not to separate brother and sisters (however, if this is not possible, try to ensure brother's and sister's placements are close together and allow contact).
- To allow looked after children and young people to be involved in the choice of their placement from the start.
- To find a place where you feel comfortable and 'at home' and can stay until the end of your time in care.

Listening to Looked After Children and Young People

- To listen to your views and act on them.
- To provide a social worker you can rely on who keeps to meetings, gives clear information, is honest and responds when needed.
- Make looked after children and young people aware of their rights and to train others in the rights of looked after children and young people.
- To ensure that young people are involved in the creation and regular review of all care plans.

Support

- Better help getting into school whatever has happened.
- To provide support so looked after children and young people can see their family (i.e. transport)
- To use reliable transport for young people.
- To organise group activities for young people in care and those leaving care.
- That if bullying arises for any looked after child or young person it will be dealt with quickly and efficiently.
- To support young people in care to find training, education or a job that suits them when they leave school.

Appendix C

Extract from Part 12 of the Constitution – Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors

6. Principal roles

6.5 To fulfil your responsibilities as a “corporate parent” for children and young people in the care of the local authority

- by having an understanding of the profile and needs of the children in the care of the local authority
- by being aware of the impact on looked-after children of all council decisions
- by considering whether this would be good enough for your own child
- by ensuring that action is taken to address shortcomings in the service and to improve outcomes for looked-after children.
- by being aware of the work and aims of the corporate parenting panel and, if nominated by your group leader, attend meetings of the corporate parenting panel as a committee member

6.6 The council has established a Corporate Parenting Panel, whose role is to secure councillor involvement and commitment throughout the council to deliver better outcomes for children and young people who are looked after. The terms of reference now follow:

Part 12.1 – Role and Function of the Corporate Parenting Panel

Composition

The Corporate Parenting Panel will comprise up to 12 elected councillors nominated by group leaders

Role and Function

To secure councillor involvement and commitment throughout the council to deliver better outcomes for children and young people who are looked after.

To ensure that corporate parenting is a key mechanism by which councillors and officers can ensure that for children and young people in its care, Wiltshire Council is providing:

- warm, welcoming and safe accommodation
- high quality care, nurturing supportive and meaningful relationships that encourage the growth of self-esteem, confidence and resilience, enabling young people to cope with change and difficult times
- the highest standard of education for all and consistent with the needs and abilities of the child
- opportunities and encouragement for self-development and keeping fit and healthy

- encouragement to take up hobbies, acquiring life skills and being a good citizen
- assistance with transition from care to looking after themselves, including the provision of suitable accommodation
- placement stability that will avoid disruption and maintain continuity of care, education placements and relationships.

The Corporate Parenting Panel will:

- undertake regular monitoring of the outcomes associated with these priorities
- make a commitment to prioritising the needs of looked-after children and young people and their carers
- receive reports from the Children in Care Council and act on their views
- provide clear strategic and political direction in relation to corporate parenting
- show ambition and aspirations for all looked-after children and care leavers
- ensure that all councillors and Wiltshire Council departments are fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as corporate parents proactively. This may involve, for example, the Corporate Parenting Panel organising specific education and training events for all members to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to be corporate parents
- receive regular/annual reports on the level and quality of services to looked-after children and care leavers
- promote achievement and acknowledge the aspirations of children and young people looked after by supporting celebration events
- investigate on behalf of all councillors ways in which the role of corporate parenting can be improved, using examples from other local authorities
- listen to the views of children, young people and their carers to involve them in the assessment and development of services
- engage with children and young people who are looked after, or have left care, by inviting them to act as advisers to the Panel
- meet with government inspectors, where appropriate, for their input into inspections
- anticipate as members of the adoption and fostering panel
- champion the provision of council-based work experience placements and apprenticeships for looked after young people
- agree a work plan, review progress, membership of the panel and attainment of its role and terms of reference and report to the Cabinet and Children's Services Select Committee as appropriate, and in any case to the Full Council annually.