

Report considered by the Corporate Parenting Panel – 26 June 2018

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE WORK OF THE MILTON KEYNES CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL 2017/18

Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel: Councillor Miles

Author and contact: Joanne Rabbitte - Head of Delivery: Corporate Parenting Services, Children and Families - Tel: 01908 253473

Executive Summary:

The Corporate Parenting Panel oversees how the Council fulfils its responsibilities as a Corporate Parent to Milton Keynes' children and young people in care and care leavers. Corporate Parenting Panel is a Committee of the Council and not part of either the Cabinet or Scrutiny arrangements as such. This annual report provides Councillors, all of whom are "Corporate Parents", with information about our children and young people and summarises the Panel's work during the Council year 2017/18. The report also explains how the Panel have engaged with young people during the year and plans to develop this in 2018/19. Councillors are invited to make suggestions which they as Corporate Parents would like the Panel to address, as well as any ways in which they can actively promote the needs of these young people within their council work and activity.

[NB the Annex to this report, detailing year end key information about Milton Keynes children and young people in care and Care Leavers, is attached.]

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That the report be received and Councillors ensure their personal awareness and responsibilities of the needs of the Children and Young People for whom they are Corporate Parents;
- 1.2 That the report and the work undertaken on their behalf in 2017/18 by members of the Corporate Parenting Panel be noted; and
- 1.3 That the emerging agenda for the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel in 2018/19 be noted.

2. Issues

- 2.1 Essential information for all Corporate Parents about the children and young people living in and leaving Milton Keynes Council Care is included in the **Annex** to this report. *[See note in executive summary.]*
- 2.2 Milton Keynes Corporate Parenting Panel has met formally with Panel members and officers on three occasions and has held three meetings with Children in Care and Care Leavers during the 2017/18 Council year. The Panel members were Councillors Betteley, Cannon, Clancy, Crooks, Green, V Hopkins, Miles and Webb. The Panel has been chaired by Councillor Miles, with the support of the two vice-chairs, Councillors Crooks and V Hopkins. The Cabinet member for Children and Families also attended. Members have

also visited the council's children's homes and attended social events with children, staff and parents/carers (see point 2.5).

2.3 During the year, the Panel has received, considered and discussed reports from professionals about a number of priority issues for Milton Keynes Children in Care (CIC) and Care Leavers and kept informed in regard to the progress and indicators that guide our success.

2.4 The key issues discussed at Panel were:

(a) The Education of Children in Care Examination Feedback 2017

The Panel received a presentation from the Virtual School Head Teacher, which detailed the performance of Children in Care and the results from the recent GCSE exams. The Virtual School Head Teacher clarified that the new GCSE marking system had been introduced for English and Maths only and was graded 1-9; all other subjects were still graded alphabetically. However there was little comparison between the two systems. Grade B was approximately similar to Grade 8; and Grade 5 and above was considered as a strong pass. The Virtual School Head Teacher also indicated that overall, Key Stage 1 (pupils aged between 5 and 7) children in care had issues with writing and Key Stage 2 (pupils aged between 7 and 11) had improved in English and Maths since the previous year.

The Panel heard that Milton Keynes was the only Virtual School nationally that measured eligibility for GCSEs and submitting this information to OFSTED for Key Stage 4 (pupils aged between 14 and 16) and the results were gradually improving year on year. Key Stage 5 (students aged 16-18, or sixth form, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland,) are improving slowly and the result would be included in the Annual Report. The Virtual School Head Teacher also indicated that the statutory release date for National Benchmarking data was in March annually and she would provide an update to the Panel after that. The Virtual School Head Teacher also indicated that there were 13 LAC in the year group of 39 that did not take GCSEs and listed the reasons for this. There was also indication from the results that pupils need to concentrate on a smaller range of subjects rather than take a large number of GCSEs where they may not perform so well. In response to a question about whether the same challenges found in children's health were reflected in their educational needs, the Virtual School Head Teacher indicated that most of the cohort of LAC children starting the GCSE exams seemed to come into care during Key Stage 3, between the ages of 11 and 14, which was a challenge both locally and nationally.

(b) The Health of Children in Care.

The Panel received and reviewed the annual report for the statutory health services provided to Milton Keynes Children in Care during the year 2017/18. The report acknowledged that children in care and care leavers were at greater risk of social exclusion and poorer outcomes than their peers and therefore needed excellent support and services to

ensure that they had happy and successful childhoods and become successful independent adults. The report pointed out that it is essential that health needs are recognised and met and that all professionals worked closely with children, young people and their carers to identify and address any areas for improvement. The report listed a number of improvement areas identified and addressed in 2016/17 and also the priority improvement areas that were being addressed in 2017/18. It was noted that Looked after Children were presenting with more complex medical issues and this was partly due to increases in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. Health assessments are now more complex and included a holistic overview, they take longer to complete and this has created pressure within the service. The report also noted that the Specialist Nurse (LAC) and Named Nurse (LAC) were now embedded with the Children's Social Work team which increased engagement and focus on a strategic and practice levels. The panel was informed that a joint piece of work had also been successfully carried out with the Children's Social Work team to obtain consent for medical assessments on one document which improved the process by avoiding duplication.

Councillors discussed the issue of substance misuse and were informed about the engagement of Looked After Children with Compass. Health Workers and the Youth Service in Milton Keynes work with COMPASS to engage with young people and will persevere with young people who need their help.

(c) Children and Young People's Participation.

A key statutory requirement is for Local Authorities to ensure that children in care participate in and contribute to decisions about their lives and contribute to the development of services provided for them.

The Panel received reports from the Participation Youth Worker on the work of the Children in Care Council explaining how young people in care and care leavers are involved in service development and have opportunities to celebrate their achievements.

The reports detailed instances of young people participating in Skills to Foster Training and recruitment interviews for key positions in Children's Services. A number of care leavers had been involved in the council's response to the Local Government Association review of the Care Leavers Service and participated in a multi-agency meeting where they were able to express their views, make suggestions and contribute to the service development plan. In addition they participated in activities to mark National Care Leavers' Week which included a meeting and interview with Robert Goodwill Minister for Education. Part of the interview was played on MKFM Radio.

Two care leavers and their personal advisors were interviewed on MKFM Radio about the challenges facing care leavers. A group of eight care leavers took part in a Worktree event which focused on skills needed for the workplace and dealing with professionals.

The members were informed of the summer activity scheme for CIC which was called Summer Sensation. This four week long programme organised in conjunction with the Virtual School and the Youth Faculty was designed to increase participation for hard to reach children. A total of 21 children attended and were involved in the activities.

As part of National Takeover Day two young people enjoyed 'Taking Over' the airwaves of MKFM radio they enjoyed the experience of being a DJ and gained a good understanding of the workings of a radio station.

Membership of the CIC Youth Group has gone from strength to strength with over 20 young people registered for the group and a waiting list in operation. The group has recently started using the Zones of Regulation which is a method used to support children and young people with managing their emotions and behaviour.

The CIC+ group is aimed at the 16 – 21 year old age bracket is attended by older CIC and care leavers – membership has steadily increased. The group has participated in the national consultation on changes in legislation and have been consulted by the Director of Children's Services and other managers in regard to service developments.

Our Voice (Children in Care Council) has also increased its membership and has been working on a number of priorities including finishing the Coming into Care Pack, health Assessment Consent Poster and the Bright Spots action plan. Young people also attended a residential training course which was run in conjunction with two other local authorities for new members of the Children in Care Council, 'Our Voice'.

The purpose of the course is to enable the young people to understand the role and function of the Council and how they can best participate.

Members were also updated on the use of Mind of my Own (MOMO) which is an App designed to help young people express their views and feel that they are listened to. The report noted that since its launch in May 2017 numbers of users had increased on a monthly basis and further training was provided later in the year. An audit was carried out which indicated the positive impact the App was having on practice. In total 98 worker accounts have been created and over 70 children have used MOMO with a worker or independently.

(d) Milton Keynes Leaving Care Arrangements and Development Plan

The Panel considered Milton Keynes Leaving Care Arrangements and Development Plan which was presented by Head of Delivery Corporate Parenting. It was reported that the Leaving Care Service was part of the Council's Corporate Parenting Service within the People Directorate and overall responsibility for the service was with the Head of Delivery for Corporate Parenting, who was directly accountable to the Service Director for Children and Families.

It was also reported that the plan had been formulated in response to the 2017 Peer Review which followed the inspection of services for Children in need of help and protection, Children in Care and Care Leavers. A stakeholder consultation event had also been carried out in August 2017.

In response to Councillors' questions, the Head of Delivery for Corporate Parenting advised that: although case-loads for each personal adviser were about 22 young people, a variety of communications methods were used such as texting, Apps, 16+ Youth Groups and drop in sessions rather than 1:1 evaluations.

All contact sessions were recorded and the level and type of contact was measured on a dashboard. The level of contact depended on each young person, as some required very little or no contact and for others it was more intense. It was also recognised that some vulnerable young people might not respond and "no contact" was also monitored; the department had daily "wash up" sessions where cases of concern were highlighted and followed up.

The department has a duty to offer support to those up to the age of 25 years as defined in the Children and Social Care Act 2017 and is waiting for more national guidance on this.

Levels of support would also depend on each young person's preference. Successful care-leaving was also about ensuring that people were helped to be independent;

Of the 8% recorded as not being in suitable accommodation, this reflected some who were in prison and a couple of older young people who were homeless; further details could be advised on request.

- It was confirmed that Bed and Breakfast temporary accommodation was not being used for homeless young people in care; 57% in education training and employment reflected the fluidity of older young people moving in and out of education and work.
- The understanding of the cohort was that there were improvements in the knowledge of the services available to young people to help them. However young people who had been in care had more challenges to engagement than those not in care;
- Some of the variations between local and national statistics reflected the methods of collecting and recording data but this was also improving; and
- Ambitious targets had been set with little areas of tolerance to ensure that the care leavers, who had considerably more challenges than that not in care, had the best support available.

The Head of Delivery for Corporate Parenting also indicated that with reference to a 16-25 Council, older young people would require support with this although that age group would have a better tolerance of a more formal meeting. Other Local Authority models for young people's Councils would be considered and Corporate Parenting Panel members will be encouraged to participate in any visits.

The Service Director (Children and Families) indicated that the priorities of young people themselves need to be considered and digital engagement ideas at other Councils could be investigated further.

(e) Milton Keynes Fostering Service Development Plan

The Panel received a presentation from Head of Delivery Corporate Parenting which detailed the Council's Fostering Service and Development Plan.

It was reported that as part of the Council Plan commitments, it was pledged to increase the number of high quality local placements, meaning children who came into care were matched with a local foster placement that really met their needs. To deliver this pledge it was recognised that improvements to working with and supporting foster carers was needed.

It was also reported that fostering was one of the most highly regulated areas in children's social care. The development plan was therefore at times technical and detailed in order to deliver compliance. However, officer colleagues were producing a separate, more accessible, document for the Council's current and future foster carers, detailing its commitment to them and to the fostering service and also the key developments that it was anticipated would directly impact upon foster carers and the young people in their care.

The Lead member for Children's Services indicated that the numbers of children taken into care in Milton Keynes had reduced since 2016 with a reduction in adolescents being taken into care which was good news. Additionally, the numbers in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and in prevention had also decreased.

- 2.5 On 12 June 2017 induction training was provided to new members by the Head of Delivery, Corporate Parenting which explained the profile of the children in care and the care leavers and outlined the shared responsibility of 'corporate parents' and what is expected. A new Councillors' Guide to Corporate Parenting document was also introduced and circulated. During 2017/18, the Corporate Parenting Panel continued to engage with children and young people. Members of the Panel visited the Council's children's homes and met with parents, children and staff at the annual fun day.
- 2.6 A member of the panel availed themselves of an opportunity to shadow social workers within the Corporate Parenting Service which was aimed at providing insight into key issues and practice dilemmas. The member attended operational meetings, shadowed duty workers and met foster carers and young people in placement.

- 2.7 The Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel attended the quarterly Virtual School governing body meetings.
- 2.8 The Panel received summary reports of the monthly visits to the homes by an Independent Visitor to provide assurance about the quality of care, safeguarding, leadership and other key issues based on the findings from the Regulation 44 visits to the Walnuts, Furze House and Westminster House Children's Homes. It was reported that young people continued to receive good quality care and were observed as being happy within the homes with staff interactions. Staff were able to evidence the progress young people were making and where required, clear baseline assessments had been introduced. A 'Targets and Achievements' book was in place in one home which provided an easily accessible overview of young people's progress. Parents had also commented on the progress their child is making and value the support provided by the homes. Members attended events with children, young people and carers, including True Triumph (our annual celebration and awards evening for Children in Care). Panel members have continued to prioritise young people's participation and to explore how to develop their engagement in the Panel's work. Two Panel meetings were hosted by the children and young people at the *Our Voice* venue on Tuesday, 18 July 2017 and 14 November 2017. The issues discussed were:

- (a) Coming into Care Pack
- (b) A social worker handover process
- (c) Social worker information cards for children and young people to keep when meeting a new social worker
- (d) Health Assessment consent poster – explaining health assessments and the meaning of 'consent' in relation to the assessment
- (e) Bright Spots Questionnaire headlines which specific exploration on Bullying at school
- (f) Social workers' statutory visits.

The meetings provided opportunities for panel members to talk to children and young people in a child friendly and informal setting about their views, feelings and wishes. It is recognised that a substantial amount of work was achieved in this forum with key issues being identified and fed back to the operational teams through the senior officers who were present.

On Tuesday, 20 March 2018 a specific meeting took place between the Corporate Parenting Panel and care leavers. The young people delivered a presentation entitled 'The life of a Care Leaver' which focused on:

- The role of the Personal Adviser
- Suitable accommodation
- Benefits and finances
- Support/ transitioning from 'in care' to 'care leaver' Gaining life skills

The meeting provided a forum for rich discussion and exchange between the CPP, young people and senior officers. Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires each local authority to consult on and publish a local offer for its care leavers. The specific issues raised have been picked up by the service and will feed into the MKC 'local offer' which will be published in September 2018.

3. Legal

The Council's role as a Corporate Parent is governed by legislation (primarily the Children Act 1989), associated guidance and regulations and case law. The Council's legal department provides clear advice as required by officers in their discharge of the council's corporate parenting responsibilities for individual children and young people.

4. Other implications

Y	Equalities/Diversity	N	Sustainability	Y	Human Rights
N	E-Government	Y	Stakeholders	N	Crime and Disorder

Background Papers: Milton Keynes Children in Care (Looked After Children) and Care Leavers Key Data 2017/18 (to be added in April 2018)

Annex: Year end key information about Milton Keynes Children and Young People in Care.