



Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel

Report from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Buckinghamshire County Council's Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) has a collective responsibility across Services to promote the Council's role as a Corporate Parent to children and young people Looked After and those receiving Aftercare services.

You would have seen our Pledge to Looked After children and young people on our desktop screens recently outlining the key pledges:

- (i) Treat you with respect and hear your voice
- (ii) Look after you
- (iii) Provide a good education for you
- (iv) Keep you healthy
- (v) Support you to be independent

We have also produced a similar pledge to young people in our After Care services.

The safeguarding and wellbeing of those who are Looked After is monitored by ensuring health, education, employment, training, placement and housing outcomes are reported to the Panel on a regular basis and issues raised and addressed. The Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) acts as a representative body for elected Members, as Corporate Parents, to ensure effective communication arrangements are in place between Panel members and the children and young people who are Looked After. Corporate Parenting Panel members constantly ask: "would this be good enough for my child?" If it is not good enough then we need to make it so.

Up to March 2016 we had 463 children who are in the care of Buckinghamshire County Council and 184 who receive our Aftercare services. The number of Looked After children and young people this time last year was 435 (157 After care) highlighting the rising demand on our resources due to the need to place children away from their families. This has added significantly to our expenditure to the tune of £2.27m.

The Corporate Parenting Panel has eight cross-party Members supported by officers, and reflects the requirement to supply information on the services we provide for Looked After children and young people and interpret how we can meet and understand their varied needs and how best we can support them.

Additionally the Panel receives annual reports from the Fostering and Adoption services, monthly statistics relating to children Looked After, standing items reporting on young people who have gone missing from care and reports detailing officers' regular inspection of the residential care homes for children in Buckinghamshire.

Members of the Panel also carry out visits to the Children's homes, and talk informally to young people to find out if they have any concerns about their care. Members have the opportunity to become linked to teams and a meeting schedule has been developed where members attend team meetings and meet social workers and managers.

This year it is significant to highlight the challenges facing Social Care as we work to improve services for children and young people in our care. The Improvement Plan developed after our inadequate Ofsted grading in June 2015 has meant that the Panel has had to reflect on their contribution to ensuring excellent services to our children in care at a time when numbers are increasing and resources are stretched. The Panel has taken responsibility to ensure that all Members and officers understand their role as Corporate Parents. As a result training for Members was undertaken including developing our key values and objectives which will be outlined in the impending Corporate Parenting Strategy that is being developed.

Here in Buckinghamshire, our Children in Care Council known as the 'We do Care Group', meet regularly to discuss new service initiatives and to encourage participation in further developing services.

We are pleased to report that we have maintained a strong relationship with our young people who participate in the We Do Care Council and we take time to listen to the views of our young people who are vocal in informing the panel of aspects of their life in care and how the strategies and policies that we put in place have a significant impact on their lives.

Our Annual Celebration Event for children and young people took place in August and was well attended by young people (and their carers) who received certificates in a variety of categories including social skills, community involvement, educational and personal achievements.

The Corporate Parenting Panel provides an important focus for the role of Members as Corporate Parents, but all Members have a responsibility to ensure that our Looked After children are well cared for and supported, so that they are able to achieve their full potential.

Recommendation

That the County Council notes the Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Panel

**LIN HAZELL
CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND LEARNING**

