

CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE



Wednesday, 15 July 2020

Democratic and Members' Services

Fiona McMillan
Monitoring Officer

16:00

Shire Hall
Castle Hill
Cambridge
CB3 0AP

Virtual meeting
[Venue Address]

AGENDA

Open to Public and Press

Meeting Theme: Hearing the voices of Children and Young People

1. Notification of the Chair and Vice Chair for the municipal year 2020/21

To note the appointments of Councillor Lis Every as the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee 2020/21.

2. Apologies for Absence

3. Declarations of Interest

4. Minutes of the meeting on 15 January 2020

The minutes of the meeting on 15 January 2020 are available to view at <https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccclive/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/MeetingDocuments.aspx> are located at the foot of the webpage under the 'Meeting Documents' heading.

5. Action Log

6. Petitions and Public Questions

- 7. Proposals for Future Engagement with Children in Care and Care Leavers and in relation to the**
- 8. Participation Report**
- 9. Foster Carer reporting to the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee**
- 10. Corporate Parenting Performance Report**
- 11. Independent Reviewing Officer's Annual Report 2019-20**
- 12. Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee Workshop and Training Plan**
- 13. Agenda Plan**

The Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee comprises the following members:

Councillor Lis Every (Chairman) Councillor Anne Hay (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Anna Bradnam Councillor Adela Costello and Councillor Elisa Meschini

For more information about this meeting, including access arrangements and facilities for people with disabilities, please contact

Clerk Name: Richenda Greenhill

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<https://tinyurl.com/CommitteeProcedure>

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**CORPORATE
PARENTING
SUB-COMMITTEE**

Minutes-Action Log



Summary

The Action Log is a list of all of the things that people have been asked to do at earlier meetings. It is included at each meeting so that members can check that everything is being done. It was last updated on **16 March 2020**.

Minutes of the meeting on 20 March 2019

93.	Actions taken by the Council in response to Child Sexual Exploitation and County Lines Gang Exploitation	Fiona van den Hout	To invite Dave Sargeant, an ex-police officer working with the Local Safeguarding Children Board, to help co-ordinate thinking on this issue and to deliver a training session. This might also be opened to members of the Children and Young People Committee.	23.10.19: Mr Sargeant has confirmed his availability for February 2020 to delivery Members training on this topic to tie into Sub - Committee theme of being and feeling safe in March 2020. Members are requested to bring available dates to the Sub-Committee in November. 20.02.20: Training delivered on 19 February 2020.	Completed
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Minutes of the meeting on 18 September 2019					
117.	Young People's Participation	Sarah-Jane Smedmer Nicola Curley	The Assistant Director, Children's Services stated that an Instagram Story could be produced which would outline the topics that had been discussed at the Sub-Committee meeting. The Chairman supported this as an approach.	07.11.19: The Assistant Director is taking a request to the next Voices Matter panel for them to help officers think through how we can make an Instagram story of the Committee purposeful for them. Tony Darnell from the CCC communications team is involved with this work. A further update will be provided after the discussions with Voices Matter.	On-going
Meeting on 20 November 2019					
126.	Education transport for children in care and care leavers	Fiona van den Hout Kate Knight	To meet with the Strategic Education Place Planning Manager and the Lead Corporate Parenting Manager to discuss how to start collecting the necessary information now to inform future decision-making on Post-18 education transport provision.	10.01.20: Joe Gilbert and Rebecca McCullen to progress this with Clare Buckingham as part of their wider work on the Local Offer. 04.03.20: Officers are collating and costing journey information for the past three years. The results will be presented to the Sub-Committee when this work is complete.	On-going
127.	CCC Guide to Corporate Parenting for Elected Members	Fiona van den Hout	The Head of Corporate Parenting stated that there was a clear process around enquiries received from councillors or MPs and that she would reflect on how best this might be presented in the guide.	10.01.20: The Head of Corporate Parenting discussing how best to present this with the Complaints Team. It is likely to be provided via the monthly Members' Newsletter.	On-going
131.	Local Offer for Care Leavers	Lesley Liston	To establish with HR what the Council currently did in its role as an employer to support care leavers and what more could potentially be done in the future. Members also wanted to know the Council's current policy in relation to employing care leavers and what allowances, if any, were or could properly	09.12.19: Raised with HR. There is not currently a policy specifically looking at this. A meeting will be arranged to update them on the discussions at the Sub-Committee meeting on 20 November 2019 and so HR can look potential processes to encourage managers to consider Care Leavers when recruiting. Discussions have also taken	On-going

			be made in relation to employing care leavers who might not hold comparable formal qualifications to their peers.	place with the LGSS Apprenticeship Team and this is something that they are looking at in relation to National Apprenticeship week in February 2020. A further update will be provided. 19.02.20: The Local Government Association are currently working with CCC to support the development of an Apprenticeship Strategy and Action Plan. Officers have fed into this work that the needs of Children Leaving Care need to be taken into account and will provide further feedback as the work progresses.	
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Meeting on 15 January 2020

138.	Improving the emotional health and wellbeing of children in care and care leavers	Sarah-Jane Smedmor	To ensure that an acronyms are fully explained in future reports and appendices.	13.02.20: Officers will ensure that this is done.	Completed
			A progress report to be brought back to the Sub-Committee in around six months' time.	26.01.20: Added to the agenda plan for July 2020.	Completed
139.	Virtual School – Children in care unvalidated end of year data	C Hiorns	To circulate links to the training videos available on YouTube.	17.01.20: Links sent to Sub-Committee members by email.	Completed
			To include a brief narrative as a footnote to provide context to the data where appropriate.	27.01.20: Information will be provided as requested in all future reports	Completed

140.	Draft Annual Corporate Parenting Report 2018/19	Fiona van den Hout	Percentages should be included on charts so that the data was accessible when viewed in black and white text. The use of acronyms should be avoided where possible and those that were used should be clearly explained.	04.03.20: Request from Sub-Committee members has been acted upon and the annual report amended accordingly.	Completed
			To reflect on the practicality of arranging more Siblings Forever events and to report back.	04.03.20 The next Sibling Forever event will take place on 17 th - 19 th April. Frequency of events are planned alongside other activities already planned with children and in accordance with their care planning.	Completed
141.	Agenda Plan	Mark Cowdell	The six month update report on the refreshed strategy for reducing the number of children in care and care leavers who were not in education, employment and training (NEET) to the Sub-Committee in March 2020 to include details of what work is being done with providers to support English and maths skills Post 16.	04.03.20: The update report has been deferred. The next report will include details of what work is being done with providers to support English and maths skills Post 16.	To be included in the next report to the Sub-Committee (to be scheduled)
142.	Sub-Committee workshop and training plan	Fiona van den Hout	To circulate diary invitations for any training sessions. To include time, venue (including room number) and parking arrangements if not at Shire Hall.	13.02.20: This will be done for all future training sessions.	Completed

PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE ENGAGEMENT WITH CHILDREN IN CARE AND CARE LEAVERS AND IN RELATION TO THE CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE FORMAT

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 15 July 2020

From: Nicola Curley
Assistant Director Children's Services

Electoral division(s): All

Outcome: To report on the developing Participation offer to Children in Care in Cambridgeshire, and to propose amendments to the Corporate Parenting Committee format that will facilitate increasingly effective engagement with children and young people.

Recommendation: The Sub-Committee is recommended to:

- a) note the information within the report relating to the Participation Offer.
- b) Agree the proposed meeting changes to facilitate increasingly effective engagement with Children in Care and Care Leavers.
- c) Agree the new reporting format of a Corporate Parenting Scorecard

<i>Officer contact:</i>		<i>Member contact:</i>	
Name:	Nicola Curley	Names:	Councillor Lis Every
Post:	Assistant Director	Role:	Chairman, Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee
Email:	Nicola.curley@peterborough.gov.uk	Email:	Lis.Every@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
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Summary:

- The participation service have been, and are continuing to look at how children in care and care leavers can be involved more in the decisions made on their behalf.
- This will include changes to the Children in Care Council and a Care Leavers drop in being organised.
- Members of the Children in Care Council will be given the opportunity to attend the Corporate Parenting Committee at informal meetings to be able to speak to Members about what they would like.
- Children's Services have been working with colleagues in Health to look at making changes to processes around Initial and Review Health Assessment referrals.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1 This report focuses on providing an update on the progress of the expanding Participation Offer in Cambridgeshire and the role of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee following the Focused Visit in respect of Children in Care by Ofsted in February 2020.
- 1.1.2 The specific recommendation made by Inspectors was that we needed to improve *"the impact of children's involvement and participation, so that children are told what is being done in response to their views and wishes, both for their own individual case plans and when contributing to strategic service planning."* It is intended that the proposals in this report will contribute to addressing the issues around strategic service planning specifically.

2. MAIN ISSUES**2.1 The Blended Participation Model**

- 2.1.1 Significant work has been undertaken by the Participation Service in adapting our work with Children in Care and Care Leavers to enhance their opportunities to be involved in both their own individual Care Plans and to have a meaningful role in influencing strategy and policy across the Corporate Parenting arena. There has been the opportunity afforded by the greater joint working with colleagues in Peterborough to enhance the Participation Service and to consider a wider, stepped approach to participation going forward. This is still in development, and the Participation report will explain this in more detail, but will include three

tiers of participation activity that would ultimately feed into the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee, such as:

- Virtual participation activity offered to all Children in Care – keeping in touch; carrying out surveys; asking specific questions on topics; feedback on proposals/documents from the Service; and critically ensuring that we deliver feedback to young people on what they have told us or asked us to do.
- Social activities – holiday events where groups of children get together for an event and there is some low key consultation undertaken or awards are presented. Members would be warmly encouraged to attend events such as these.
- A more formalised Children in Care Council. This would meet possibly bi-monthly, and be attended by the Heads of Service for Corporate Parenting. Guests could be invited to address specific topics as requested by the young people. This group would consider key items in more depth; create the survey questions for the virtual group; make virtual content; and decide what they wanted to ask the Corporate Parenting Committee to scrutinise at the informal meetings. We would like to work towards a shared Children in Care Council across the two Authorities but this will take time to develop.
- Care Leavers drop in – this will be used as a parallel activity to the CIC Council.

2.2 Facilitating More Effective Engagement with Children and Young People

2.2.1 In order to assure Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee members of their opportunity to continue to scrutinise the activity of officers and the Service effectively, but also to dovetail with the various children's participation groups in order to be able to fully engage with young people, the following recommendations are made:

- That the Sub-Committee continues to hold six meetings a year, but, due to the special circumstances of young people attending the meeting, that it arranges its business over three formal and three informal meetings. The meetings would be themed around Placement, Education and Health, and the formal and informal meetings link to each other and provide different perspectives on the same issues. This would provide an opportunity for a single topic to be considered in depth to enable councillors to fully understand the complexity of the issue in the round, have a proper opportunity to scrutinise the information before them and challenge officers in a timely and thorough manner. The formal

meetings remain public fora, where formal reports are received and officers are held to account for service delivery and outcomes.

- That the informal meetings are held alternately, and are co-chaired by Councillor Every, Chair of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee, and a member of the Children in Care Council as the model develops. Officers would report back on promised activity, but there is little other formal reporting as this is seen as an opportunity for Corporate Parents to listen to young people to talk freely about their experiences in care and as care leavers, and discuss ways to improve services going forward. Case studies could be provided to enable more detailed discussion of particular areas, and to support contributions by the young people attending.
- That a bespoke reporting scorecard is developed for the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee that enables Members to receive key information in a format that highlights areas of success or concern quickly.
- That provision is made for informal briefing notes to be circulated to Sub-Committee Members when required in response to emerging situations or concerns due to the potential gaps between the formal Sub-Committee sitting. A draft pro forma is attached at Appendix 1 for information.
- To support the Sub-Committee in enhancing their current ways of working and ensure that Members' feedback is included in the new model, it is proposed to deliver a workshop to the Sub-Committee to facilitate the adoption of the changes.

2.2.2 This is felt to be an effective way to address the issues raised in the last Ofsted visit and move structures forward, but most importantly to reassure the Sub-Committee that they are able to spend purposeful time with the Children in Care that they are so passionate about supporting, hearing their concerns and being able to act upon them in a timely manner.

3. UPDATE ON NEW HEALTH PROCESSES FOR INITIAL AND REVIEW HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

3.1 Since the last time the Sub-Committee met, there has also been significant progress made in developing new systems to trigger Initial and Review Health Assessments, since the implementation of the LiquidLogic case management system in January 2020. This had been a challenging area historically due to the previous system in Cambridgeshire County Council and the lack of alignment with colleague health systems, resulting in less effective performance than we would like.

3.2 I am very pleased to report that a joint working group has been able to create a new process where requests for assessments are triggered automatically when children come into care, and a pro forma within the system pre-populates information to ensure that health colleagues have all the information they need in order to be able to carry out effective medicals. This was implemented on the system on 21 June 2020 due to some understandable delays in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, but staff have already reported how helpful it is to structure their work.

3.3 It is important to note that during the pandemic, all assessments have been completed virtually, unless concerns identified a need for a specific face to face assessment. Our current performance stands at 88% for initial health assessments (IHAs) for children placed within Cambridgeshire and 0% for children outside the County, giving an overall percentage of 58%. As Members are aware, we continue to be unable to influence other areas to prioritise our children, and this is an on-going national issue that will impact on local performance until it is resolved.

4. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

4.1 A good quality of life for everyone

It is our view that these recommendations enable more direct and meaningful engagement for the Sub-Committee with the issues of importance to our Children in Care and Care Leavers, and so will enhance its ability to contribute to the corporate priority.

4.2 Thriving places for people to live

There are no significant implications within this category

4.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children

These proposals will support the Sub-Committee in its goal of repairing and enhancing new best starts for our most vulnerable children and young adults.

5. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Resource Implications

There are no significant implications within this category

5.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications within this category

5.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications within this category

5.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

It is hoped that this model will improve the access of our Children in Care and Care Leavers to the decision making bodies in the Council, and will ensure that all service activity is more rigorously scrutinised through this lens as well as others.

5.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

We aim to significantly improve engagement with our Children in Care and Care Leavers with the adoption of this new model of working.

5.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications within this category

5.7 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications within this category

Source Documents	Location
None	

Committee Requesting Briefing Note	
Date	
Officer Providing Briefing Note	
Subject	

BRIEFING NOTE FORM

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 15 July 2020

From: Sika Smith – Lead Practice Improvement Manager

Electoral division(s): All

Outcome: To keep the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee informed about the range of consultation events and activities offered by the Participation Service.

Recommendation: To comment or provide feedback on the range of consultation events and activities the Participation Service provide for children in care and care leavers.

<i>Officer contact:</i>	<i>Member contact:</i>
Name: Sika Smith Post: Lead Practice Improvement Manager Email: sika.smith@cambridgeshire.gov.uk Tel: 01480 376268	Name: Councillor Lis Every Role: Chairman, Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee Email: Lis.Every@cambridgeshire.gov.uk Tel: (office) 01223 706398



Summary:

- The Participation Team hosted activities over the February half term.
- The team continue to promote the use of the Mind of My Own APP offering individual and group training.
- In response to Covid-19, the participation offer moved to a virtual offer since late March 2020.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee requested an update on the work of the Participation Service at each of its meetings.

This report covers activity from January to June 2020 as the Sub-Committee meetings in March and May were cancelled due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 Update on Involvement of Young People in Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee (CPSC)**

As part of our commitment to strengthen engagement of young people in the CPSC meeting, there have been ongoing discussions between members and officers. There is a real commitment from all to ensure that the voice of children and young people are heard and contribute to discussions and thinking undertaken within the CPSC. We also recognise that there are various barriers in being able to facilitate young people's participation in these meetings which include the formality of the meeting, issues of logistics and issues around it being a public meeting so could compromise young people's confidentiality. Furthermore, feedback from the recent Ofsted focussed visit observed the need to strengthen the feedback loop of what children and young people say, what we do in response, how we feedback to the children and young people and how we evidence the impact. The participation focus is to strengthen the links between the various participation meetings and activities we have with young people, including stronger alignment the agendas and themes from the CPSC with the discussions that take place in Children in Care Council (CiCC).

In this context, a proposal for an alternative mechanism for engagement is set out below for consideration.

We propose the CPSC establish a more informal meeting process with the Children In Care Council (CiCC) membership:

- There will be three meetings per year of the informal meeting with representatives from the CiCC.
- We will work towards the Committee being co-chaired with a young person from the CiCC
- That the format of the meeting will be child friendly to include such features as informal attire; child friendly and jargon free language; informal seating arrangements, for example a round table format with appropriate refreshments.
- The membership will be membership or representative membership of the CPSC and the CiCC and the CiCC members will be supported by officers from the Participation Team.
- The purpose of these informal committee meetings is a two way dialogue for the CiCC to raise questions to the CPSC under the auspices of its role to bring challenge and scrutiny to its corporate parents; and for committee members to speak the CiCC about matters on which they would like the views, wishes and feelings from CiC and CL. This will also inform the work of the CiCC.
- There will be three core themes – Health, Education and Placements, and case studies will be available to address each theme as appropriate.
- In addition, the CiCC will prepare a report for the CPSC formal meeting and the option for a co-opted care experienced member will be maintained. Participation officers will present the CiCC report to the formal meeting.
- The CPSC will provide feedback to the CiCC on the impact of their representations and any actions taken in response to their feedback; challenge and scrutiny.

This proposal is the first tier of a four-tier model of practice, intended to build on existing arrangements, including the learning from re-modelling activity in response to COVID-19, and to diversify the scope to consult with children and young people in a variety of ways. The model offers sustainability and resilience through use of a variety of mechanisms / medium to consult and engage children and young people in participation and co-production in a fluid and responsive manner.

At the heart of the model is a consistent and core approach to strengthen the feedback loop to children and young people and the ability to demonstrate more impact from participation activity, and this will meet the expectations of the Ofsted action plan. The work will be supported by a working group – the Strategic Participation Group - with membership from the SQA/ Participation service and Corporate Parenting Head of Service and Service Managers including the Virtual Schools.

2.2 Tier Two: Universal: Virtual participation activity offered to all children in care (CIC) & care leavers (CL).

- Keeping in touch and interactive news letters;
- Surveys;
- One off Virtual conversations around specific topics; feedback on specific topic questions; new practice documents; service development proposals
- Corporate Parent feedback to children and young people on the actions taken in response to what they have told us.

2.3 Tier Three: Targeted: “Fun” engagement activities where groups of children and young people can get together for an event that also incorporates a participation / consultation activity with key officers including senior managers. Members will be invited to some of these events as is appropriate.

- Seasonal one off events – Linked to key and pertinent celebratory events
- National Care Leaver week;
- Global Children in Care day;
- World / International Children’s day;
- Summer; Spring and Winter holiday events
- CiC annual awards
- Just Us youth group

Participants will be registered and receive feedback and information about the impact of their contributions. Participants may be invited to take part in further work to measure the impact of their feedback over time.

2.4 Tier Four a: Formal structured: CiC Council Targeted activity with a core group of CiCC members typically aged 11/12 years plus.

- A semi-formal model with 8-10 children in care / care leavers as core members.
- The CiCC will meet six times a year (bi-monthly) and will devise an annual work plan; and collated learning / feedback from any other participation work including for example the work by the Young Inspectors etc.
- The CiCC will be supported / administered by the Participation Service. Please see Appendix 2 for draft TOR.
- The CiCCs will undertake projects including such that may require more significant input and development over a period of time.
- The CiCC may create the survey questions for the virtual universal offer and may on occasions act as a conduit for the themes and feedback from other participation activity into feedback and questions for the Corporate Parenting Committee.
- Building on the success of virtual meetings, the CiCC will meet informally on a fortnightly basis with members of the participation service. This may be a mix of virtual and face to face meetings.
- The CiCC will receive feedback as to the impact of all of the work they undertake and will be invited to consider any further steps to measure impact over time where this is appropriate.

Tier Four b: Care Leavers Forum (CLF) – we propose building on the existing Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) forum to extend to a joint Peterborough City Council/ CCC forum and include a specific focus for Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers

- A semi-formal model with 8-10 Care Leavers as core members.
- The CLF will meet informally on a fortnightly basis and may still include separate drop in offers
- Formal meetings will take place six times a year (bi-monthly)
- The CLF will be supported and administered by the Participation Service.
- The CL Forum will undertake projects including such that may require more significant input and development over a period of time.
- The CLF may create survey questions for the virtual universal offer and may on occasions act as a conduit for the themes and feedback from other Care Leaver participation activity into feedback and questions for the Corporate Parenting Committee via the CiCC.
- The CLF will receive feedback as to the impact of all of the work they undertake and will be invited to consider any further steps to measure impact over time where this is appropriate.
- Terms of Reference to be developed

2.5 Children in Care Council (CICC) Update

Since Mid-March 2020, and the inception of the Covid-19 pandemic government directives for social distancing, all face to face meetings and events have been cancelled for the foreseeable future. We have kept in touch with young people through a number of age related newsletters and have established virtual meetings with care leavers and those young people who have been part of the Children in Care Council. We have facilitated fortnightly virtual children in care council meetings with young people, in small groups of up to four young people. The groups have met on five occasions during this reporting period. The focus of the meetings have been discussions around tiles on The Promise, with consideration of how life has been impacted by COVID-19 and what adults will need to think about / do when supporting young people back into the new 'normal'.

The experiences, views and feedback from the young people is summarised below. Some of the feedback is recorded in the first person.

Support you to achieve your goals and reach your potential, in school and in your hobbies and interests.

Discussion on going back to school, what will that be like for you? How are you coping with school work from home? How will you manage returning to school and restarting out of school clubs and hobbies?

Your message to your Corporate Parents

Themes from Young People's feedback:

1. Each of the young people are managing their daily routines in different ways with some sticking to the school day structure and doing learning activities during the normal school hours whilst others are taking a more flexible approach
2. Individual schools are approaching the setting of work in different ways with some giving work in bigger chunks and others giving smaller bite size chunks
3. Some young people prefer to receive their work in more bite size chunks to help pace themselves, manage their learning and regular opportunities for one to one support from their teachers
4. Some teachers appear to be proactive in contacting their pupils whilst others are available, for example one young person their teacher calls them twice a week to see how they are getting on. But for others it is left to the student to ask for help if needed
5. Some young people just want to get back to school and into their normal routine from the outset when this is possible
6. Others prefer a phased approach so they can ease their way back into the daily school routine
7. Some of you are worried about pressure to catch up on things and that there might be a big rush to do so
8. Some young people might feel really stressed at the thought of going back to school
9. For some young people they feel there could be a tension between the transition back into the academic aspects of school and the social.

Young People's ideas

1. Teachers using video chats or maybe having virtual drop ins would be a good idea
2. Time should be given to introduce the social aspects and some support may be needed in this regard too – starting a new school year group or new school; reconnecting friendship groups etc.
3. There needs to be some personalised planning for each young person around life after COVID is important - and in particular:
 - a. How they will go back to school,
 - b. Identify and work towards bridging any gaps in learning to get back on track to achieve their predicted grades etc;
 - c. Pick up on their existing hobbies as well as any new found interests
 - d. How they will resume their social life and friendships in the community

Contact and Help for you to see important people in your life

Have you still be able to remain in contact with your family member during lockdown?

You said it has been difficult for you because you have been unable to have contact visits. You said it's hard to see your family members on a screen during lockdown knowing you can't see them in person and you don't know how long this is going to continue for.

However, you are happy to engage in video calls with those family members that are important to you. You told us that you have been able to have regular video calls with your family members. One of you shared that they had some recent good news as her request to have phone contact with grandad had been agreed.

How has your alternative virtual contact arrangements been?

You said in most cases of virtual contact meeting, they have gone to plan but unfortunately, sometimes there has been technical difficulties.

You told us that you were happy the virtual contact meetings were a reasonable alternative and you pleased that they are happening more than your previous face-to-face meetings.

Have you supported with arranging contact with your family members?

You said you feel support by both your foster carers and your social workers when arranging contact with family members on the phone or through video call.

Some of you told us that you were in regular contact with your social worker and believes their foster carers and social worker have worked together to arrange the phone calls with their family members.

Some of you told us that you have found the virtual contact meeting a little emotional/distressing with the overwhelming want to have a hug from their mother/siblings but they said they receive great support from their foster carers.

You also told us that you have had regular contact with her social worker via email to confirm when virtual contact is happening.

How do you think you will feel when contact visits in person will be allowed again?

You said you will be excited to see your family members but also nervous about whether you can give them a hug. Because of this confusion, you would prefer that the virtual meetings stay in place until physical contact is permitted.

You all agreed that rather than doing the wrong thing, you would like face-to-face meeting to take place only when the social distancing guidelines have been removed.

You said you were aware of and excited about the new 'bubble' guidelines. You told us about how excited you were as you would be as your cousins would be able to visit.

Some of you talked about understanding about not being close to another student at school and so it would probably be the same for a contact visit. They also talked about being given advice when everyone can stop social distancing.

You said that you were sure that their foster carers would let her know about the rules of contact visits.

What do you want participation work to look like when we can meet face-to-face again

You said meeting once a month would be great.

Some of you told us that school days are sometimes difficult because we do afterschool activities and the days change each term so we can't stick to one certain time and day.

Some of you suggested going for dinner once a month and being part of Children In Care Council sounds good.

You also said that you would like to do more projects like the two day Virtual Reality workshop and the arts award with the Fitzwilliam Museum.

You all agreed that you had so much fun using the VR headsets and that their foster carers had brought some for them to use at home.

Your message to your Corporate Parents:

1. We are managing well with the changes made to their respective contact arrangements.
2. We feel well supported by their social workers and foster carers when arranging contact phone/video calls.
3. Some of us were really happy that they had had even more contact with some family members with virtual contact
4. Some of us feel uninformed about what contact visits in person will look like when the lockdown eases.
5. Some of us are happy about the amount of information that are getting and know that their foster carers will inform them of any rules/changes they need to know about regarding contact visits in person.
6. We are happy about the relaxation of lockdown.
7. We are looking forward to face-to-face meetings with Participation team again.

2.6 The Care Leaver Forum

Since November 2019 we have been supporting two groups of care leavers to meet in either Cambridge city or the Wisbech area. The meetings are taking shape with a steadily growing group of regular participants who are interested to be consulted about their experiences and engage in wider participation and co-production activities. Since April 2020, due to Covid-19, the meetings have now been taking place virtually on a weekly basis.

2.7 Care Leaver Consultation and Feedback

'Passport to Independence'

There have been focused discussions on preparing for independence and the forum has provided comprehensive consultation feedback to the corporate parenting service

on the new 'Passport to Independence' documentation. We await response as to the impact of their feedback.

2.8 Children in Care Placement Sufficiency Strategy

The Care Leaver forum have also worked with the commissioning team to make a contribution to the Sufficiency Strategy to ensure that the voice of young people is reflected. The commission team will use the views and opinions of young people to assist them in their work with providers, social workers and other types of services to make sure that we have the best possible support and places for children in care and care leavers to live.

Care Leaver Forum Feedback on Support for Achieving Independence
<p>Key Messages for Corporate Parents:</p> <p>The young people told us when they were transitioning from care to independence it could have been made easier if the process was more efficient and they shared some examples from their own experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having only had 7 days to prepare and pack, 3- 6 months would have made the process easier • Not having adequate life skills • The importance of being mentally stable to be capable of successfully transition to independence • Not having a way of expressing feelings and experiences in order to resolve problems • The staff being moved around and recruited without considering your feelings – feeling 'dismissed' when a well-known personal advisor (PA) leaves causes anxiety. • It felt as though you had no choice of area or type of housing they are moving to. • Feeling lost and disoriented between ages of 16 and 18 – knowing a move to independent living was due, but not having any of the finer detail until just a few weeks before it happened. • Feeling unprepared to transition into independence in terms of skills • The important role of a Personal Advisor • Lack of knowledge about Pathway Plans
<p>Young People's ideas they feel corporate parents should consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Crash course in independent living skills, including: money management, prioritising bills, working household appliances, housework and other essential knowledge – taught by someone already known such as a PA, or already heard of, for example a social worker. 2. Course on how to keep a healthy mind and help with understanding how mental illness can progress. Also, a list of local mental health services available to care leavers would help them to know who they can contact if necessary.

3. Greater awareness of and access to optional participation work/ activities, as another route to ensure voice is heard during this process.
4. PAs need to have the right skills to help vulnerable people like us, they need to be kind and empathic
5. Handovers between PAs could be improved.
6. A pathway plan project for care leavers to review and understand it (similar to the project planned with the Independents passport). The care leavers would then be able to offer their feedback to appropriate teams on the pathway plan.

The young people's challenge to their corporate parents:-

1. How can you make sure information provided during the journey to leaving care prevents this from feeling like a disorganised and lonely time?
2. What can you do to ensure enough preparation time for young people in getting ready to move to independence, and to avoid it being rushed?
3. How do you ensure access to individual advocacy, in addition to promoting the Participation service?
4. What can be done to improve choice, and input into/ understanding of decision making about type and location of accommodation?

2.9 Care Leaver Forum Impact

- The young people are using the forum effectively to share their views in a relaxed environment with adults who understand the issues that arise when a young person has been looked after and the challenges that they can face when leaving care.
- The young people are now proactively taking forward topics that are important to them to discuss with key officers of the council and being able to share their views on how they may be able to affect service improvement.

2.10 Lived Experience during the Covid-19 'lock down' – Feedback from the Children in Care Council members and Care Leavers:

During the early stages of lockdown the participation team made contact with a number of foster carers, children and young people (C&YP) to establish how things were going for them.

The prevalent themes from feedback are as follows:

- Most children and young people are coping with lockdown
- Children and young people are missing seeing friends and going to school
- Some placements are struggling with home schooling
- Some of the children and young people are looking forward to going back to school as they have found home schooling boring, however most are engaging well with school work and remaining focused
- Children and young people are enjoying keeping in touch with Participation officers and the Team's virtual newsletters
- Some are enjoying learning new skills and are taking up new interests

- Some children and young people have reported that they are using social media more and others feel they want to do other activities rather than have more screen time
- Children and young people in the same placement are enjoying one another's company and doing things together like writing raps, using tiktok and gaming
- Care leavers have told us that they enjoy keeping in touch with their PA and the participation team virtually and are looking forward to the care leaver cuppa and chat virtual meeting once a week.
- A couple of care leavers reported difficulties getting food delivery slots and the team are helping these young people to access the support that is available to them including food parcels.
- A couple of children in care told us they enjoy getting the newsletter but they didn't want to join in with the virtual CIC meeting as they don't see themselves as being in care as they feel part of their foster family. These children were competition winners for the cake decorating in issue 1.

2.11 Interactive Newsletters

Since the COVID-19 lockdown and suspension of all face to face activities, the Participation Team has joined with the Peterborough Participation Team and have been producing fortnightly newsletters. One for the under 12's, one for teenagers and one for care leavers. The newsletters have included competitions, information regarding help and advice on Covid-19 and emotional well-being, fun things to do such as virtual tours of zoos or museums, links to theatre productions and musicals, online courses and training, as well as quizzes and recipe ideas.

2.12 Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Just Us Group meetings pre Covid-19 'lock down'

A CiCC meeting took place on the 17 February 2020. This coincided with Care Day, on the 14 February, which is a celebration of children and young people with care experience.

The meeting involved a session with a local celebrated artist Xidus Pain, who specialises in delivering Lyric Writing workshops. 6 young people attended including three new members and the group worked with Xidus to produce their own lyrics about being in care, their family and interests. Xidus talked about his work and how he had made a rap to celebrate the Queen's diamond jubilee. The session started with Xidus playing six tracks and asked the group to think about how the music made them feel and what kinds of images it made them think of, and they each shared their thoughts. The group then had time to write phrases or words on a sheet of paper, which he used this to do some "freestyle rap" as well as incorporating some elements of The Promise.

The words that the group wrote on the sheet included:-

"Winding roads; Sun; Countryside; Motorcycle; Voices Matter; Rejection; We all have problems but we are strong enough to overcome them; Cars; Racing: Pumping the ride; Good to do homework"

The young people were then asked to write key things about themselves and life, this was the beginning of the lyrics for the young people's own rap which they went onto record later on in the afternoon. It was agreed with the young people that they would wait to hear their own recording to decide if they wanted to showcase it at the Awards Ceremony in April. We are still exploring with the young people if their recording can be used in training for the children's social care workforce.

Feedback from young people:

***Making our own rap,
everything was good***

***Everything was good
nothing was bad***

***I liked rapping, it was fun
to express myself***

***I liked it and would come
again***

Impact

- The session with Xidus pain supported the group of young people to express themselves and get creative.
- By the end of the day the three young people who had not met any of the group were well integrated and working well together as a group and as individuals, to produce a rap of their own. They also said they would like to stay involved in participation.
- Themes that came out from the discussions held on the day including not having contact arranged with significant people that young people had asked to see, being able to visit the grave of a deceased parent and having purposeful activities to get involved in when a young person isn't able to attend school. All of these issues have been passed to the relevant teams to address and young people have received feedback.

We hosted a Just Us Group over the February half term which was a joint session with colleagues from the 'library presents' team and offered a Samba drumming session. 12 young people came along to this session, 5 of which hadn't been to any events previously. Eight foster carers also joined in with the activity.

Impact

The session provided the Participation Team the opportunity to meet children and young people and promote our events to encourage their involvement. The children and young people enjoyed the session and feedback included:-

- It was good, it would be better with more instruments
- Great event, perfect for 'all'
- Great family activity!
- Drumming rhythm happy
- Happy & Calm!
- Learnt rhythms

- Enjoyed drumming today, great feeling :-)
- Stress relief!
- I really enjoyed drumming today, made me feel happy
- It was good.
- I loved the drums
- I don't have as much rhythm as I thought!
- Alive :-)
- Yes drumming.... drumming and I am happy

2.13 Children in Care Council's contribution to the OFSTED ILAC Focussed Inspection February 2020

The team made contact with 15 young people to invite them to meet with the inspectors. Whilst most of the young people were interested, they were unable to get involved due to other commitments which could not be rearranged. On the day we supported two young CiCC members to meet with the lead inspector. They talked positively about their foster carers, the support they were afforded in various areas of their lives, such as education and the plans they have for the future. They were able to talk about some of the activities and meetings that they have attended with the participation team. The Inspectors enjoyed meeting with these two young people and appreciated their time.

As noted elsewhere in this report, we know we need to strengthen how we complete feedback loop and evidence the impact of the work of the CiCC and this includes working with CiCC members to develop a range of means by which they can contribute to future inspections which may also include via skype and telephone calls.

2.14 Networking and embedding participation

We have continued to attend operational based team meetings to share feedback from the children and young people who have engaged in the different activities and events we have hosted, and to share the planned participation activities and how practitioners can support young people getting involved. The bi-monthly strategic participation meeting with key senior managers across children's social care supports the participation communication strategy; proactively considers and promotes co-production opportunities; and aims to increase the number of children and young people engaging in and contributing to the participation strategy. Our next meeting is on the 26 June 2020.

2.15 Staffing

The Participation Team currently has a manager, two participation workers, and some support from a business support assistant. The apprentice who was in post to promote the use of the Mind of My Own APP has now left the team as his apprenticeship came to an end. We had a leaving lunch and we will keep in touch. He plans to continue to attend the Care Leavers Forum and get involved in other co-production opportunities.

2.16 Mind of My Own

The team continues to offer training and support as a team or on a one to one basis to enhance practitioners understanding in how to use the application to capture the voice of the child. The information in Appendix 1 summarises Mind of My Own activity for January to May 2020.

2.17 CONCLUSION

We are committed to promoting and encouraging our children in care and care leavers to access various activity based events as the vehicle through which their voices can be heard, and they can also become involved in activities to influence service improvement and development. We are pleased that there is a continuing increase of new children and young people coming to events and getting involved. We will work at pace to strengthen our feedback loops to children and young people and evidencing the impact of their contributions and work.

3.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

None identified

3.1 Resource Implications

N/A

3.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

N/A

3.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

N/A

3.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

N/A

3.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

N/A

3.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

N/A

3.7 Public Health Implications

N/A

Source Documents	Location
None	

Overview of Mind of My Own

Mind of My Own is a web based application which can be accessed via a smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer. The program helps children and young people express themselves and communicate with professionals in their lives making sure they are heard. Both One App and Express are effective direct work tools which can be used by a range of professionals from social workers and teachers to support workers.

The **MOMO One App** is a great way for young people to share their thoughts and send them to those who need to hear from them. The app has a number of options called statements which the young person can choose to use, for example preparing for a meeting, share good news or sort a problem. This version of the app provides prompts in terms of what the young person might want to share, for example: preparing for a meeting there are a number of questions, like who do you want to be there, sit next to or talk about, but there is also room for the young person to expand and provide more of a narrative of their views. The app is available to young people to have their own account or they can access it via their workers account when they have a one to one session. The app is able to assist in guiding or structuring a conversation with a young person. The young person can choose who they want to send their statement to.

The **MOMO Express App** is aimed at younger children or those with additional needs and uses expressive pictures, minimal text and affirming sounds. It has some accessibility features that can be tailored to the needs of the child and it can be used to support education, health or social care planning or review process, including EHC plans. The Express App is designed to be used with a worker.

Mind of My Own Summary

The Participation team continue to offer team training and one to one support.

There was a decrease in the use of the APP that coincided with the beginning of the Covid19 pandemic. The service continues to promote the App, including an article in the fortnightly newsletters.

We had 28 young people and 20 workers sign up for a mind of my own account during this period of reporting.

Worker Accounts – 434 Young People Accounts - 159					
	JAN 2020	FEB 2020	MARCH 2020	APRIL 2020	MAY 2020
Number of statements per month from YP and Workers	25	16	12	2	11
MOMO Express Statements per month	9	22	5	0	3

Top 3 subject matters each month MOMO ONE	28% Foster Carer Review 24% Preparation 16% My Well Being	63% Worker Visit 13% Preparation 6% A Problem, Share Good News, Pathway and My Well Being	42% Worker Visit 17% Share Good News 17% My well Being	100% My Well Being	55% My Life 27% Foster Carer Review 9% My Well Being 9% Worker Visit
Top 3 subject matters each month MOMO EXPRESS	26% About Me 21% - My Life, My Education and My Day	31% About Me 23% My Life 18% My Education	50% My Life 33% About Me 17% My Day	No Statements received	67% About Me 33% My Health



Appendix 2

Cambridgeshire's Children in Care Council Terms of Reference

1. Mission Statement
2. Aims
3. Statutory Framework
4. Children In Care Council (CiCC)
 - a. Membership
 - b. Professional Guests
 - c. Meeting Frequency and Timing
 - d. CiCC Informal Meetings
 - e. Governance and Work Planning
5. Corporate Parenting Sub Committee– informal meetings with the CiCC
 - a. Meeting Frequency and Timing
 - b. Governance
6. Accountability and Impact

1. Mission Statement

The Young People:

‘Our aim is to use our experiences of being in care and leaving care to improve the services for other children. As the Children in Care Council we will work towards achieving the best possible standards for every child and young person looked after by Cambridgeshire to achieve their full potential.’

The Officers and Members:

“As Corporate Parents, are committed to empowering our children and young people to be agents of change and influence. The Children in Care Council (CiCC) will facilitate and encourage children and young people to share their perspectives and direct experiences to influence service development and practice and we will listen to their voices to ensure that we are maximising their effectiveness and relevance. We will evidence the impact the CiCC feedback has had on our thinking and be open and honest as to what changes can or cannot be made and why.”

2. Aims:

- To reflect and represent the views of children and young people in the care of Cambridgeshire as well as care leavers.

- To work with members, senior managers and key professionals to make positive changes and support good outcomes for all children in care and care leavers including those who are placed out of county.
- To explore and promote opportunities for young people to be involved training & recruitment of staff, carers and commissioned services for children in care and care leavers.

3. Statutory Framework

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child gives children and young people the right to say what they think when adults make decisions which affect them.

Care Matters – Time for Change published 2007 set out the expectation that every council will set up a Children in Care Council (CICC). Through the CICC, children and young people should be able to put their experiences of the care system directly to those responsible for corporate parenting including the DCS and Lead Member, who should demonstrate how they will maintain contact with children and young people in care.

The CICC therefore plays a vital role in ensuring children and young people with care experience have a say in their care and the issues that matter to them. CICCs bring together passionate and dedicated young people with those who run care services to share their experiences and ideas on how to improve the provision care in their area.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 highlights seven principles in respect of the Corporate Parents role which are

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of children and young people in their care or leaving their care
- To encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- To help children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for children and young people
- For children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
- To prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

These principles should shape the mind-set and culture of every part of the local authority in how it carries out all of its functions in relation to children in care and care leavers.

4 The Children in Care Council (CICC)

Membership

‘Care Experienced’ children and young people /adults ages 12 years up to 25 years.

Professional Guests

Professionals are welcome to attend the meeting but will need prior consent from young people.

Meeting Frequency and timing

The CICC will meet a minimum of six times per year.

The meetings will take place at a time agreed with the young people, typically in school holidays, after school /college hours, and be hosted at various venues across the county.

CiCC informal meetings

In addition, the CiCC will meet informally on a fortnightly basis with members of the participation service. This may be a mix of virtual and face to face meetings. Primarily the purpose of these meetings will be to facilitate ongoing project / participation / co-production work. Other young people who have shown an interest to be involved in a particular project may join the informal meetings.

Governance and work planning

There will be an agreed agenda and work programme for all of the CiCC meetings – formal and informal - which will be developed by the CICC membership, led by the children with support from the participation officers.

Officers and Committee Members should furnish the CiCC with requests for support and where possible this will be set in advance to inform an annual programme of work. Such might include for example consultation over a specific service / practice issue; request for involvement in a new service development; involvement in recruitment processes; involvement in training activity; a young person inspection of a service; and so on.

5. Corporate Parenting Committee – Informal meetings with the CiCC

There will be three meetings per year of the Committee with representatives from the respective CIC Council.

The purpose of these Committee meetings is a two way dialogue for the CiCC to raise questions to the Committee under the auspices of its role to bring challenge and scrutiny to its corporate parents. And for committee members to speak the CiCC about matters on which they would like the views, wishes and feelings from Children in Care and Care Leavers. This will also inform the work of the CiCC.

The informal committee will also provide feedback to the CiCC as to the impact of their representations and any actions taken in response to their feedback; challenge and scrutiny.

Meeting Frequency and timing

The Committee Meeting with the CICC will meet three times per year.

Governance

There will be an agreed agenda for the Informal Committee meetings that will be developed by the CICC membership, led by the children with support from the participation officers.

A record of the meeting and any actions agreed will be made and the record circulated to all members within one week of the meeting held.

Accountability and Impact

The local authority officers and Committee members, as Corporate Parents, are committed to empowering our children and young people to be agents of change and influence. It is in all of our interests to make sure that we listen to the voices of those in receipt of our services to ensure that we are maximising their effectiveness and relevance. Children in care councils provide a model to facilitate and encourage children and young people to share their perspectives and direct experiences to influence service development and practice.

We need to evidence impact such feedback has had on our thinking and be open and honest as to what changes can or cannot be made and why, from the feedback that children and young people give us.

There will be an agreed programme of work and an action log to evidence work completed; its purpose; feedback loops and impact for children in care and care leavers.

DRAFT

FOSTER CARER REPORTING TO THE CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 15 July 2020

From: Fiona Van Den Hout
Head of Service, Corporate Parenting

Electoral division(s): All

Outcome: Provide an opportunity for the Cambridgeshire Foster Care Association to contribute to Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee meetings.

Recommendation: The Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee is recommended to:

- a) Consider the attendance of the Cambridgeshire Foster Care Association chairperson or their representative at Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee meetings as an observer. They will be invited to make a contribution at the absolute discretion of the Chair.
- b) consider accepting a report from the Cambridgeshire Foster Care Association at each of its meetings.

<i>Officer contact:</i>		<i>Member contact:</i>	
Name:	Fiona Van Den Hout	Names:	Councillor Lis Every
Post:	Head of Service, Corporate Parenting	Role:	Chairman, Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee
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Tel:	(office) 01223 518739	Tel:	(office) 01223 706398

Summary:

We would like the Sub-Committee to hear directly from the Foster Care Association about the work that they do to support children who live with the Council's foster carers.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The revision of the fostering service structure in November 2018 included a recognition of the need to re-establish a formal link with Cambridgeshire's foster carers to provide a mechanism for seeking foster carer views on service improvement and in order to promote positive outcomes for the children in the Council's care. Consequently, Cambridgeshire's Foster Care Association was re-established and has been functioning for over a year.
- 1.2 A Foster Care Association is a voluntary organisation that is run by foster carers for foster carers with the aim of bringing foster carers together, providing them with a stronger voice that can influence and develop services for them and crucially for the children in their care.
- 1.3 An overview of Cambridgeshire's Foster Care Association is attached at Appendix 1 detailing membership, aims and initiatives.

2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 This proposal requests members of the Sub-Committee to consider whether the voice of foster carers should be included in formal Sub-Committee meetings in this way in order to provide a mechanism to hear the views of foster carers on topics or issues that relate to children in their care.
- 2.2 This proposal has been discussed informally with the chairperson of the association who has confirmed that they would welcome this opportunity, which is closely aligned to their aims. It is further proposed that the Cambridgeshire Foster Care Association is invited to submit a report to Sub-Committee meetings, supported by the Lead Fostering Manager.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 **The best start for Cambridgeshire's children**
The work of foster carers supports the best start for Cambridgeshire's children in care

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 **Resource Implications**
There are no significant implications

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There are no significant implications

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications

4.7 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications

Source Documents	Location
None	N/A



Cambridgeshire Foster Carers' Association

Foster Carers Supporting Foster Carers

Agenda Item No: 9 – Appendix 1

Fostering allows us to make a real difference to a child's life. As foster carers we provide children a safe home, stability, security and consistency. This is often challenging and we all need support.

About Our Association

The Cambridgeshire Foster Carer' Association (CFCA) is a voluntary organisation set up and run by foster carers to provide support for all our carers and the children we look after.

The association was founded in November 2018 and started to become a functional group in early Spring 2019.

We have created our Website and a Closed Facebook Group to improve communication, encourage discussion groups, promote events and involve all in our wider foster carer community.

We have a formal signed joint agreement and constitution with our Local Authority, including funding. The document clearly describes the partnership arrangements between our association and the Fostering Service.

Our Aims

We want to raise the profile of foster carers and ensure we are viewed as professionals. Work with the Fostering Service to improve our support, services and remuneration. Providing the best possible care for all the children we look after.

Being part of our Association gives carers the opportunities to; raise issues about our ability to foster children successfully. Build a partnership with our Fostering Service so carers views are shared with senior managers. Help organise events for our children and young people to meet and have fun.

Membership

CFCA membership is open to Cambridgeshire County Council foster carers living in Cambridgeshire and those who live outside the County, including;

- Foster Carers
- Short Term Kinship Foster Carers
- Family Link Carers
- Supported Lodgings Carers
- Remand and Specialist Foster Carers

There are now 139 combined registered Website Users and Facebook Group members

What we have achieved since January 2019

- Created a secure website for CFCA members which holds forms, information, Foster Carer handbook events and much more. Our 'One Stop Shop' for Foster Carers
- Created a closed Facebook page for CFCA members to communicate
- Assisting in the Foster Carer Recruitment Events
- Formal signed Agreement with FS & Our Constitution
- Attending the Corporate Parenting Meetings
- Worry Packs for young people (part CFCA funded)
- Worked with RAPS and Clinician Team to improve services & training
- Attending Skills to Foster as the voice of the Foster Carer
- Working with the Participation Team
- Children's Christmas Party
- Babysitting Circle
- Single Carer Groups
- Arranging child care at Fostering Support Groups

Still Working on these Initiatives & Ideas

- An initiative to improve foster carer - CiC social worker relationship
- Passwords for the CiC to improve security for both carers and children
- Review of the foster carer Mentoring process
- ID badges for foster carers
- Foster Carer Charter

Initiatives & Ideas on our Immediate Agenda

- Creating a library of resources for carers
- Adding a new section on the website to enable more diverse content
- Comfort Packs for young people when they come into care
- Work with FS to review 16 + care
- Telephone directory of the most important numbers
- Reviewing concessions at Leisure facilities in Cambridgeshire for carers

CORPORATE PARENTING PERFORMANCE REPORT

To: **Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee**

Meeting Date: **15 July 2020**

From: **Nicola Curley
Assistant Director Children's Services**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Outcome: **The purpose of this report is to update the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee in respect of the numbers of children and young people currently being looked after by the Council and to provide a breakdown of the types of placements in which they are living.**

Recommendation: **The Sub Committee is recommended to:**

- a) to note the content of the report, and**
- b) raise any queries with lead officers**

<i>Officer contact:</i>		<i>Member contact:</i>	
Name:	Nicola Curley	Names:	Councillor Lis Every
Post:	Assistant Director Children's Services	Role:	Chairman, Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee
Email:	nicola.curley@peterborough.gov.uk	Email:	Lis.Every@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel:	01733 864065	Tel:	(office) 01223 706398

Summary:

- As at 31 May 2020 there were 717 Children in Care.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report will be submitted to each Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee.

2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 Of the 717 children in care they were in the following placements:

- 253 children were placed with in house foster carers providing placements for the Local Authority.
- 217 children were in foster care and placed with independent fostering agencies (IFAs). The agencies work with the Local Authority on a contractual basis to provide foster placements.
- 86 post 16 year olds were living on their own, with support (independent living) but still classed as Children in Care with an allocated social worker.
- 26 children have a court order (Placement Order) that allows them to live with their prospective adoptive parents whilst they are awaiting a final adoption order.
- 37 children were placed with family or friends carers (connected person). These carers are formally assessed in the same way that our other in house carers are assessed and are presented to the Fostering Panel for approval in the same way. They are paid the same level of allowances as other in house foster carers.
- 12 children were living with their parents but considered as looked after children because they are subject to a full care orders so the local authority still shares parental responsibility with the birth parent. Placements with parents are often made pending a plan for reunification with the parent and in some cases will result in an application for care orders to be discharged.
- 60 children and young people (without disabilities) were placed in residential care which provides intensive support in a residential setting. These placements are most usually made when it is clear that foster care is not able to meet the child or young person's needs. Residential care is nearly always accessed by adolescents and only very rarely used for younger children.

- We are beginning to see an improving picture in respect of initial health assessments being completed within 28 days, although there is still further to go. Performance had reached 64% in the last quarter of the last financial year, compared with a low point of less than 20% of these assessments being completed on time in the same period a year ago.
- We continue to need to promote dental checks for our children in care, but performance in relation to annual health checks is also consistently above 80%; again not quite as good as we would want it to be, but a good basis from which to improve further.
- We are continuing to focus on improving outcomes for our care leavers in respect of the proportion in suitable accommodation and who are in education, employment and training. It is worth noting that these are areas where Covid-19 may have an adverse impact on outcomes for our young people.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 A good quality of life for everyone

We strive to ensure that all children in care are in the best possible placement for their needs.

3.2 Thriving places for people to live

There are no significant implications within this category.

3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children

The service ensures that children in care are given all the best opportunities in life.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Resource Implications

There are no significant implications in this report

3.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications in this report

3.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications in this report

3.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

Children in care and care leavers will be invited to be involved in working with the Local Authority looking at these areas.

3.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

We will continue to improve engagement with our children in care and care leavers.

3.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

No significant implications in this report

3.7 Public Health Implications

No significant implications in this report.

Source Documents	Location
None	

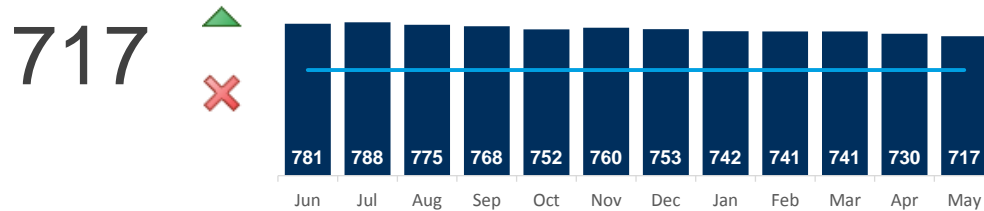
CCC Corporate Parenting Scorecard

Corporate Parenting Scorecard

May 2020

HEADLINE FIGURES

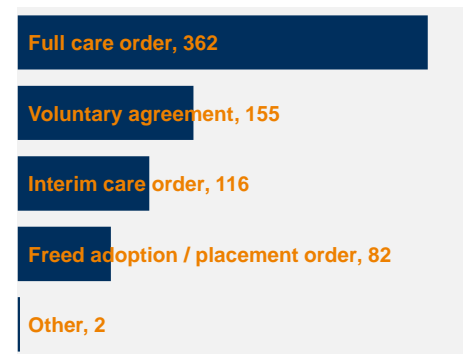
Number of children in care on the last day of May



Staffing

	Establishment	Average Caseload	Change	Performance
Family Safeguarding Qualified social workers	64	16		
Children in Care Qualified social workers	33	20.25		
Leaving Care Personal Advisors	12	21		
Independent Reviewing Officers	10.4	67		

Legal status of children in care



Length of time children have been in care

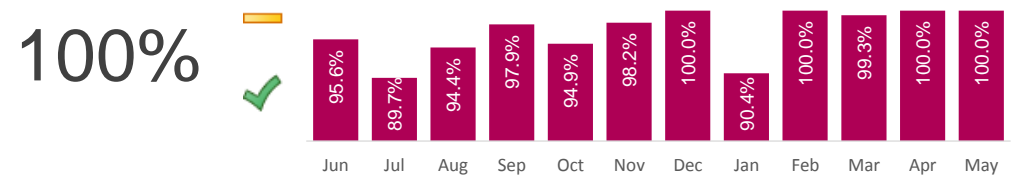


Key

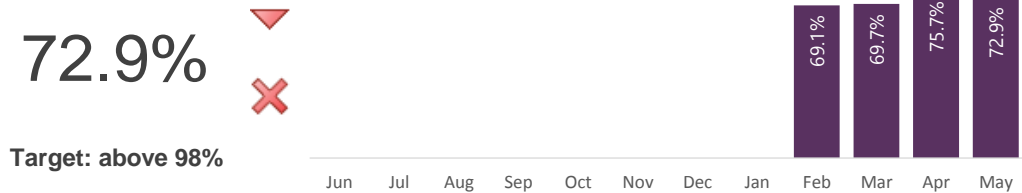
Change since previous month	Improved	Stayed the same	Deteriorated
Performance against target	Strong	Acceptable	Poor

SERVICE STANDARDS

% of child in care reviews which were held on time (year to date, and during each month)

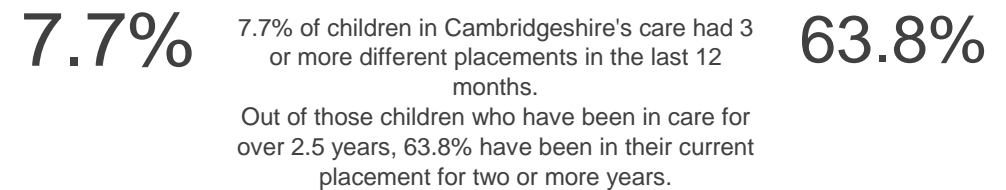


% of child in care statutory visits which were carried out on time (year to date, and during each month)

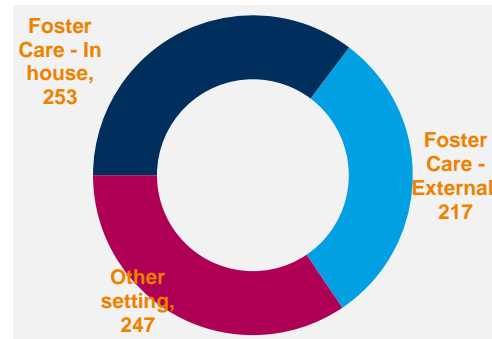


PLACEMENTS

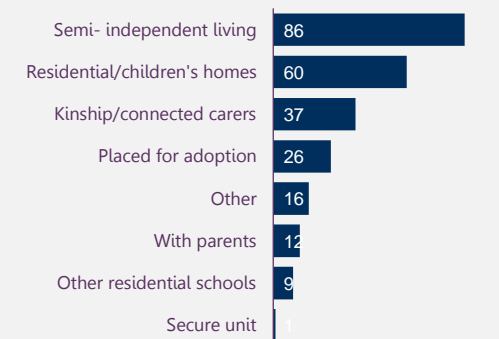
Placement stability



Type of placement of children in care

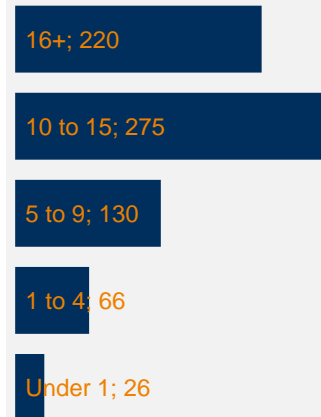


Other settings: breakdown



EDUCATION

Children in care by age group



% of school-aged children in care who have a PEP in place

98.9%

A Personal Education Plan (PEP) was in place for 451 of 456 children in Y1 - Y11, who were in the care of CCC and on the role of the virtual school at 13 March 2020.

78.3%

78.3% of Cambridge's children in care are taught in good or outstanding schools.

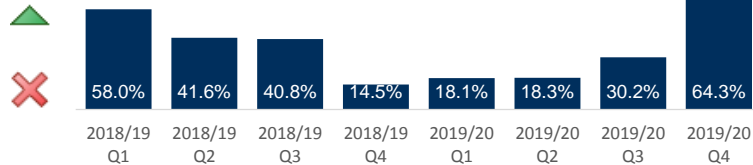
As of 2019/20 Q4

% of school-aged children in care in good or outstanding schools

HEALTH - SERVICE STANDARDS

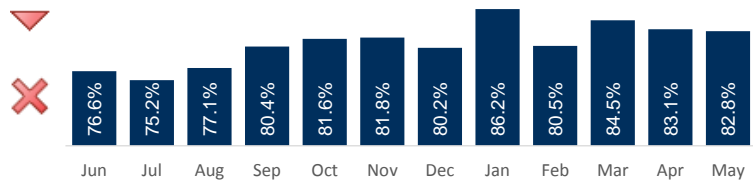
Children in care whose initial health assessment was completed on time (Year to date and by quarter)

26.8%



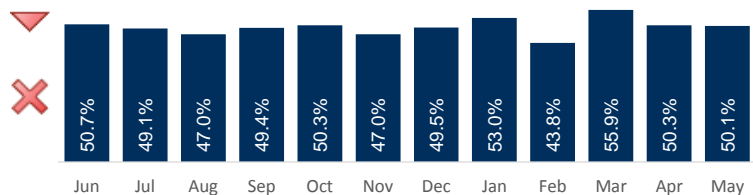
Children in care whose annual health assessment was completed on time

82.8%



Children in care whose annual dental examination was completed on time

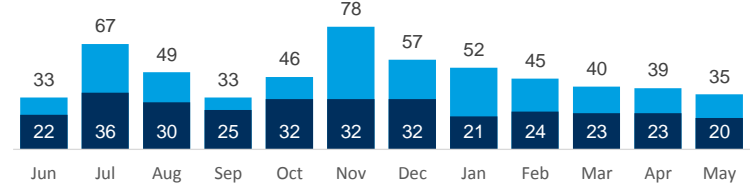
50.1%



Children in care who go missing (with number of episodes)

20 35

Episodes

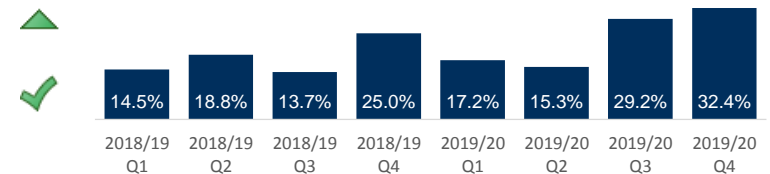


Children

ADOPTION

% of children leaving care who are adopted (Year to date and by quarter)

22.1%



Timeliness of adoption process

Time to placement

480

Target: below 430

For children adopted during the past 12 months, an average of 480 days passed between the child entering care and them moving into their adoptive placement. An average of 267.3 days passed between their placement order being granted and approval of a match with their adopters.

Time to match

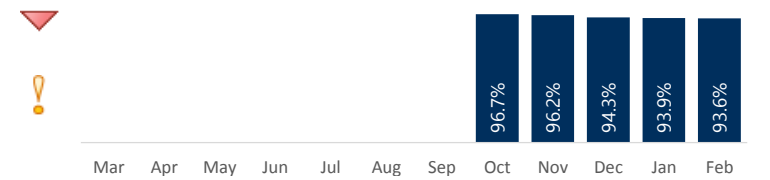
267

Target: below 185

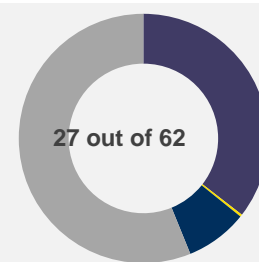
CARE LEAVERS

Care Leavers who have a pathway plan in place

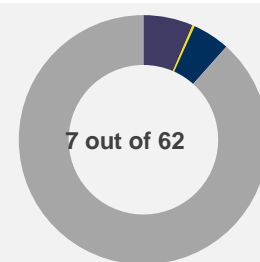
93.6%



19 to 21 year old care leavers who are not in employment, education or training (NEET)



19 to 21 year old care leavers who live in unsuitable accommodation



INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER'S ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

To: **Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee**

Meeting Date: **15 July 2020**

From: **Olly Grant
Independent Reviewing Service Manager**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Outcome: **The Annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) report provides quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to the IRO Services in Cambridgeshire as required by statutory guidance. This report covers the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.**

Recommendation: **The Sub-Committee is recommended to note the report.**

<i>Officer contact:</i>		<i>Member contact:</i>	
Name:	Alison Bennett	Names:	Councillor Lis Every
Post:	Assistant Director of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	Role:	Chairman, Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee
	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	Email:	Lis.Every@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
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Tel:	01480 372452		

Summary:

This Annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) report covers the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

Key highlights of this report are:

- The number of children in care fell by 62 this year (from 780 at the end of March 2019 to 718 at the end of March 2020).
- A total of 2275 Child in Care Reviews were held this year.
- Timeliness of Reviews continues to be excellent.
- The IROs Escalation Protocol has been fully embedded across the service. The work of IROs has proved to be significant for children and has contributed to an overall improvement in children being settled and stable in care.

The full report is attached at Appendix I. This report finishes with an evaluation of the IRO Service Action Plan of 2019-20 and outlines the new IRO Service Action Plan for 2020-21

1. BACKGROUND

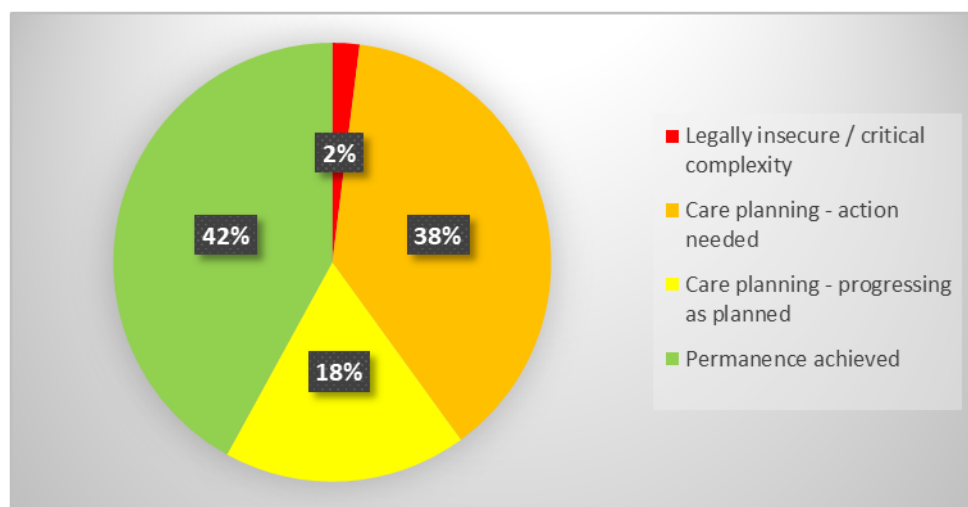
- 1 The appointment of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is a legal requirement under Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act (2002). Amendments to statutory guidance in 2010 embedded the IRO role further within 'Care Planning Placement and Case Review' and 'The IRO Handbook'.
- 1.2 The IRO Handbook states: 'The manager should be responsible for the production of an annual report for the scrutiny of the members of the corporate parenting panel. This report should identify good practice but should also highlight issues for further development, including where urgent action is needed.' (IRO Handbook 2010, page 48, paragraph 7.11.)

2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 Purpose of the IRO Service: It is a key responsibility of the IRO to ensure that the local authority gives due consideration to the views expressed by the child within care planning. The core mechanism for reviewing the child's care plan and ascertaining the child's wishes and feelings is the child's 'Child in Care' (CIC) Review, which are held at statutory intervals. The IRO has a responsibility to monitor the local authority's performance of its functions in relation to the child's case. If the IRO has concerns with respect to drift or delay within the child's care planning they will escalate the issue through the Case Alert and Dispute Resolution Protocol.

- 2.2 Profile of the population of children in care: There were 718 children in care at the end of March 2020.
- 2.3 Professional profile of the IRO Service: The IRO team is comprised of a Service Manager, 10.4 full-time equivalent staff, an Agency IRO and a dedicated Business Support team. Staffing is generally very stable and there was minimal change in the composition of the team this year.
- 2.4 Performance of the IRO Service: Each IRO works with approximately 60 children and young people; this caseload is considered to be moderate. 99% of CIC Reviews were held within statutory timescales; an improvement on last year.
- 2.5 Voice of the child in care planning: This year 55% of children over the age of 4 attended their CIC Reviews in person. Not all children and young people wish to attend their Reviews. 36% conveyed their views via another person, through Mind of My Own or through a consultation document.
- 2.6 Observations of the operational practice and performance with children and young people in care:

Permanence overview 2019-20:



Over the 12 months between April 2019 and March 2020 the IROs raised 738 escalations to social care managers to prompt them to address the specific issues of drift or delay raised. This is more than double the number of escalations raised the previous year. The types of issues raised by IROs fell loosely into seven categories (in order of highest number of escalations):

- Planning for permanence
- Safeguarding
- Child's holistic needs or rights
- Preparation for leaving care
- Accountability and record keeping
- Professional network

- Child's legal status

- 2.7 Feedback on the IRO Service: A new evaluation form for service-users was introduced towards the end of 2019. Overall, feedback from children, parents, foster carers and other professionals has been positive. The majority of young people 'always' felt that their IRO listens to them, 'always' feels their IRO is open and honest and 'always' feels supported during their Reviews.
- 2.8 Impact of the IRO Service: There is evidence that decisions made by IROs Reviews, and where necessary subsequent escalations, have positively impacted children. The IROs independence allows them to have an objective oversight of the care plan, which can sometimes highlight questions about how the plan meets the child's short and long term needs, or how it aligns with the wishes of the child, which social workers may have overlooked. Therefore the independent scrutiny also supports the social work teams to reflect on their planning and keep the child's experience at the centre of what they do.
- 2.9 Review of the IRO Service Action Plan 2019-20: Please see full report at Appendix I for details.
- 2.10 IRO Service Action Plan 2020-21:

Objective 1: To further strengthen the relationship between the IRO Service and Voices Matter (Cambridgeshire's Children in Care Council).

Objective 2: To evaluate the new ways of working that have been established in response to covid-19 restrictions, and preserve the elements that have proven to be effective for children.

Objective 3: To further improve the feedback loop with respect to the comments received from children and young people after their Reviews.

Objective 4: To establish a routine for IROs to regularly meet with young people to co-audit their care plans and pathway plans.

Objective 5: To collate and analyse information gathered from Placement Breakdown Meetings for children in foster care.

3. **ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

Report authors should evaluate the proposal(s) in light of their alignment with the following three Corporate Priorities.

- 3.1 **A good quality of life for everyone**
There are no significant implications for this priority.
- 3.2 **Thriving places for people to live**
There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children
The report above sets out the implications for this priority in **paragraphs 2.1 and 2.6.**

3.4 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050
There are no significant implications for this priority.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Implications
n/a

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications
n/a

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications
n/a

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications
n/a

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications
n/a

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement
n/a

4.7 Public Health Implications
n/a

Source Documents	Location
None	

Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

IRO ANNUAL REPORT April 2019 to March 2020

Olly Grant
Independent Reviewing Service Manager
Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

Executive Summary

This Annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) report provides quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to the IRO Services in Cambridgeshire as required by statutory guidance. This report covers the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

Key highlights of this report are:

- The number of children in care fell by 62 this year (from 780 at the end of March 2019 to 718 at the end of March 2020).
- A total of 2275 Child in Care Reviews were held this year.
- Timeliness of Reviews continues to be excellent.
- The IROs Escalation Protocol has been fully embedded across the service. The impact of IROs oversight and escalation where necessary has proved to be significant for children and has contributed to an overall improvement in the proportion of children who are settled and stable in care.

This report concludes with an evaluation of the IRO Service Action Plan of 2019-20 and outlines the new IRO Service Action Plan for 2020-21

Contents

	<u>Page</u>
1.0 Purpose of the IRO Service	4
2.0 Profile of the population of children in care	5
3.0 Professional profile of the IRO Service	6
4.0 Performance of the IRO Service	9
5.0 Voice of the child in care planning	11
6.0 Observations of the organisation's practice and performance	12
7.0 Impact of the IRO Service	16
8.0 Feedback on the IRO Service	18
9.0 Review of the IRO Service Action Plan 2019/20	20
10.0 IRO Service Action Plan 2020/21	24

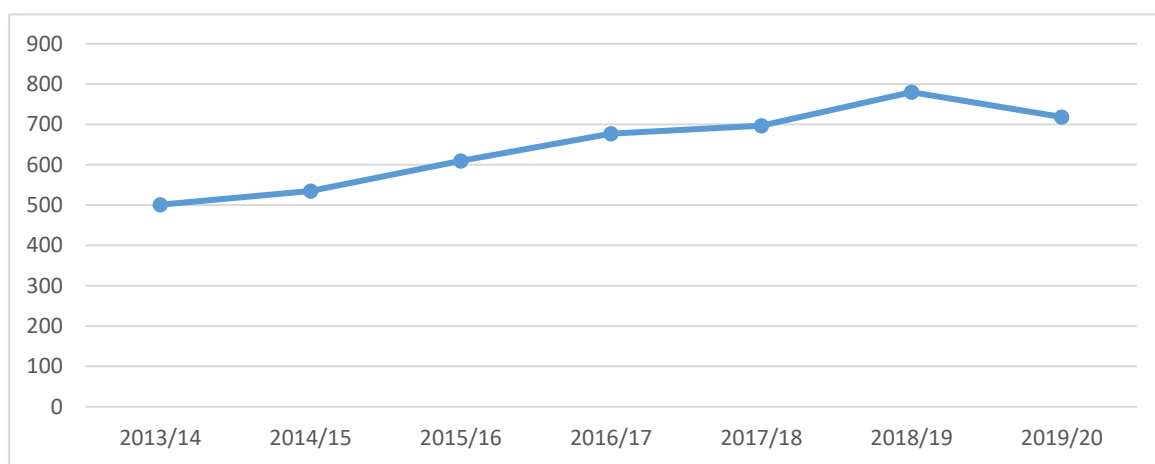
1.0 Purpose of the IRO Service

- 1.1 The appointment of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is a legal requirement under Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act (2002). Amendments to statutory guidance in 2010 embedded the IRO role further within 'Care Planning Placement and Case Review' and 'The IRO Handbook'.
- 1.2 The IRO Handbook states: 'The manager should be responsible for the production of an annual report for the scrutiny of the members of the corporate parenting panel. This report should identify good practice but should also highlight issues for further development, including where urgent action is needed.' (IRO Handbook 2010, page 48, paragraph 7.11.)
- 1.3 Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that every child who is "looked after" (in this report referred to as "in care") must have a Care Plan. The Care Plan must detail the long-term plan for the child's upbringing and the arrangements made to meet the child's day-to-day needs.
- 1.4 It is a core responsibility of the IRO to ensure that the local authority gives due consideration to any views expressed by the child within care planning. The IRO has a responsibility to monitor the local authority's performance of its functions in relation to the child's case.
- 1.5 Every local authority is required to have a dispute resolution procedure that reflects the process for effectively resolving areas of disagreement raised by the IRO in respect of care planning. This includes access to independent legal advice for the IRO and referral to the Child and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS).
- 1.6 The core mechanism for reviewing the child's care plan and ascertaining the child's wishes and feelings, is the child's 'Child in Care' (CIC) Review, which are held at statutory intervals; initially within 20 days of the child coming into care, then within three months later, and then at least once every six months after that until the child leaves care.

2.0 Profile of the population of children in care

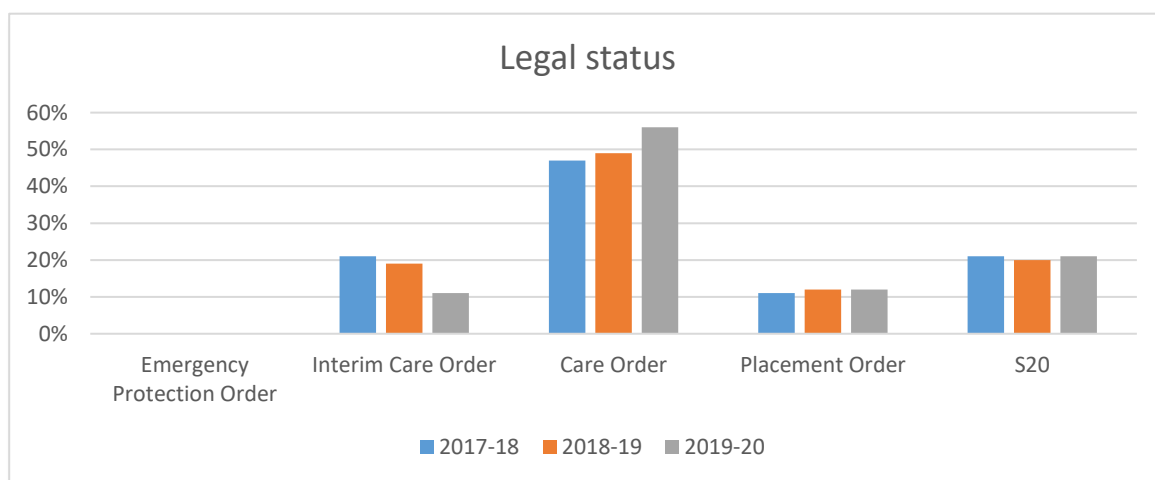
- 2.1 As at the end of March 2020 there were 718 Cambridgeshire children in care. This compares to 780 at the end of March 2019 and represents a decrease of 8% over the past year. There had been a steady increase over the last five years of the numbers of children in care as represented in Graph 1. The trend began to reverse in May 2019.

Graph 1: Number of Children in Care



- 2.2 Table 2 illustrates that there is a larger proportion of children who are the subject of care orders, and fewer who are the subject of interim care orders than over the past two years. This suggests that court proceedings may have become swifter overall for children.

Graph 2: Legal status of Children in Care



3.0 Professional Profile of the IRO Service

- 3.1 In Cambridgeshire the IRO Service sits within Safeguarding and Quality Assurance (SQA) and is accountable to the Assistant Director of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance. SQA broadly exists to act as a 'critical friend' to the organisation. The wider functions of SQA include:
- The Child Protection Service: chairing conferences and quality assuring CP Plans;
 - The LADO Service: managing allegations against staff and volunteers working with children;
 - Customer Care: addressing customer feedback including complaints, from across People and Communities Directorate;
 - Quality Assurance; carrying out audits and delivering workshops to support practice improvement as outlined in the QA framework;
 - Principal Social Worker; championing best social work practice.

Staff Team

- 3.2 The staffing establishment for the team is 10.4 IROs (full-time equivalent). 1.4 posts are fixed term to March 2021 and the remaining nine are permanent. Since December 2018 there has also been additional Agency IRO cover in place to cover vacancies and help to manage the volume of work for the team.
- 3.3 Once again, membership of the IRO team has been stable this year, with no departures of permanent staff.
- 3.4 In terms of diversity, there are only three male members of staff and the rest of the IRO Team are female. The majority of the staff team identify as White British. Overall the team do not reflect the gender balance and ethnic mix of the population of children in care in Cambridgeshire, though all recruitment selection is not discriminatory and open to all. There are however a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds represented within the social work teams.
- 3.5 Attached to the IRO Service is a dedicated Business Support Team of one Senior Business Support Officer and 2.5 FTE Business Officers.

- 3.6 There is a permanent Service Manager in post and a second Service Manager (shared with Peterborough) this arrangement enables the sharing of the line management of the IROs.

Staff Development and Support

- 3.7 Each IRO has 1:1 supervision every other month with their Line Manager to reflect on performance, practice, development and support, as well as access to informal supervision when needed. 2019 also saw the introduction of bi-monthly Group Supervision to allow for further opportunities for reflective team discussions.
- 3.8 Monthly IRO Team Meetings take place in Huntingdon and attendance is mandatory for all IROs. Standard agenda items include staff wellbeing and management updates. Often visitors from other parts of the organisation are invited, which helps to maintain good working relationships and communication between the IROs and the wider professional network working Cambridgeshire's children in care.
- 3.9 In early 2020 The IRO Team participated in bespoke training in Motivational Interviewing and a workshop on the Family Safeguarding Model to help to inform and prepare them for the implementation of the new way of working for the Safeguarding Teams.
- 3.10 The Eastern Region IRO Managers group and IRO practitioners groups are established within the region. Cambridgeshire's IRO Service Manager and two IROs are active members of the Eastern Region group. The quarterly regional meetings offer a space for rich discussion about dilemmas and challenges of the role, national trends, significant case law developments and learning from one another.

Workload demand

- 3.11 The IRO Handbook recommends a caseload for each full-time equivalent IRO is between 50 and 70 children. This volume of cases should allow the IRO to fulfil all their statutory functions to the best of their ability. This will include the conduct of CIC Reviews within timeframe, consulting children prior to their review and a continuous overview of the welfare of the child and their permanence plan. At the beginning of April 2019 caseloads were high at an average of 69 per full-time IRO. By the end of the year caseloads had gone down to an average of 60, which felt much more manageable for staff.

- 3.12 Effective business support staff use established systems to support the IROs. This does not include the typing of minutes, which the IROs complete themselves. All IROs ensure that they distribute the decisions from CIC Review meetings to the responsible Team Manager within five working days of the review in accordance with the statutory guidance.
- 3.13 In Cambridgeshire the IRO service has responsibility for convening and chairing statutory Secure Accommodation Reviews for all children living in a secure setting. Children in secure accommodation are subject to Secure Accommodation Orders due to extreme risks of absconding and associated risks of harm to themselves or others. In 2019/20 five Cambridgeshire young people were placed in secure accommodation; one in Nottingham, one in Southampton and three in Scotland. Each SAR is chaired by a member of the IRO team and another member of the IRO team acts as one of the members of the decision-making Panel at the SAR. The child's allocated IRO also attends the SAR and therefore overall this area of work significantly contributed to the workload of the IRO team this year.

4.0 Performance of the IRO Service

- 4.1 A total of 2275 Reviews were held in the year 2019-20. This is a significant rise from the 2022 Reviews that were held in 2018-19, and the 1974 Reviews 2017-18.
- 4.2 In 2019-20 99% of CIC Reviews were held within statutory timescale. This is an improvement from last year, which was 93%. The reasons for late Reviews this year were:
- Review rearranged as no attendees at scheduled Review
 - Social worker off sick / unable to attend the scheduled Review at short notice
 - Late notification of child coming into care
 - Foster carer and young person unwell so the Review had to be re-scheduled
 - Care plan not sufficiently prepared for the Review so the Review had to be re-scheduled
- 4.3 IROs chair Reviews at the child's preferred venue. This is often at the child's foster home or residential setting. 52% of children are placed out of county, which means that a significant proportion of IROs working time is spent travelling. On average a full-time IRO will travel around 904 miles per month.
- 4.4 It is important that IROs maintain a level of continuous oversight into the progress of the care planning for children that they work with. IROs are therefore required to record evidence of their monitoring through a record of their 'footprint' on the child's case. Twice yearly 'Footprint Audits' illustrated that there was significant improvement in this area over the year.
- 4.5 Monthly IRO Peer and Manager Audits of CIC Review Reports and annual direct observations of chairs continue this year. Feedback to IROs helps to focus on the strengths of their work and ensures there is a consistent and high standard of written and direct work the whole team.
- 4.6 January 2020 saw the introductions of Liquid Logic as a database recording system for Cambridgeshire's children. This meant significant shifts and adjustments for IROs and Business Support to learn how to set up and record CIC Reviews. The team had excellent quality IT support and attention to assist with the transition, which has now been fully embedded.
- 4.7 Towards the end of March 2020 the IRO Service began working from home in accordance with the covid-19 lockdown restrictions. This limited all

Reviews to being virtual and IRO visits to children were suspended. IROs chaired Reviews through Skype and communication with young people increased through phone and video calls.

5.0 Voice of the child in care planning

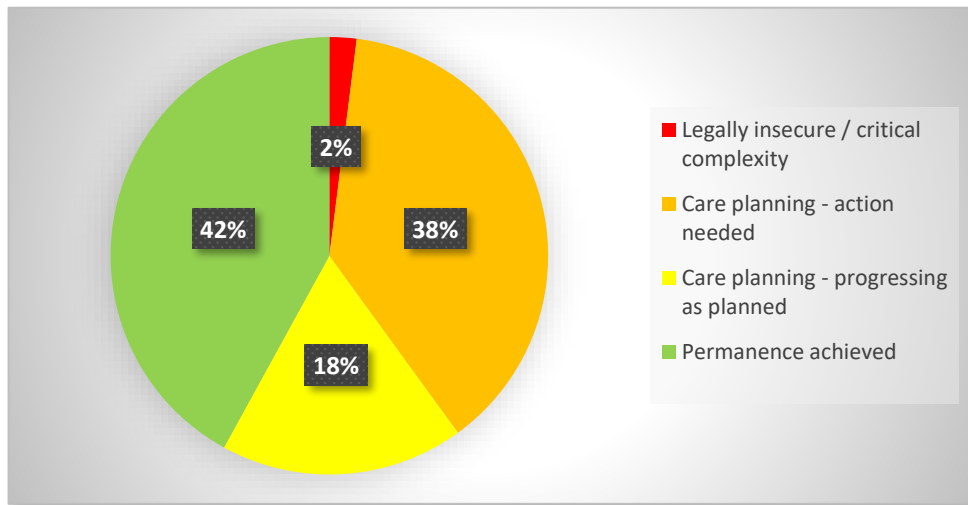
- 5.1 There is an expectation nationally that children's views are sought in an age appropriate manner for their CIC Reviews. This year in Cambridgeshire 55% of children over the age of 4 attended their CIC Reviews in person. Not all children and young people wish to attend their Reviews; 36% conveyed their views via another person, through Mind of My Own or through a consultation document.
- 5.2 This year 59% of children were visited by their IROs in between Reviews so that IROs could keep in touch and monitor how their wishes and feelings are impacting on ongoing care planning.
- 5.3 NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service) provides advocates where they are requested by Cambridgeshire children in care. Advocates are there to support the child to put their views across, or to represent the child's views on their behalf at any meeting relevant to that child. NYAS do not work with children who are subjects of care proceedings as these children are allocated a CAFCASS Guardian to advocate for them and reflect their views in court. This year, NYAS worked with 276 Cambridgeshire children in care.

6.0 Observations of the organisation's practice and performance with children in care

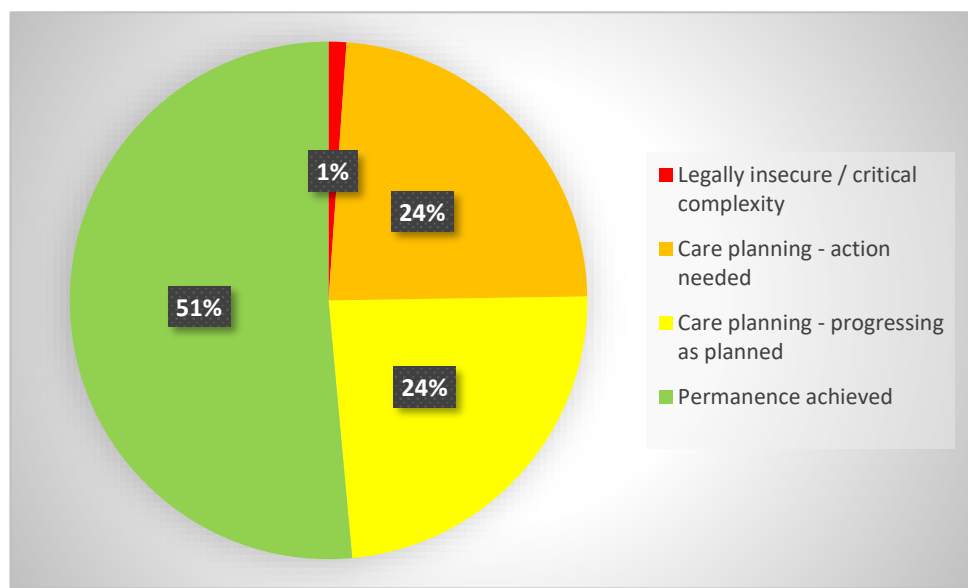
Permanence tracking

- 6.1 The IRO Service is instrumental in the monitoring and tracking of permanence for children in care. The IRO Service manages a Central Permanence Tracker (CPT) which is updated regularly from the outcomes of Reviews and escalations. The CPT is used to track any patterns and themes that indicate obstacles to permanence for children and areas where there have been improvements.
- 6.2 The children who have critical complications or delays to their care plans, such as children who have been waiting an extensive period of time to be adopted or who are missing from care, are flagged 'Red' on the CPT. These children have CIC Reviews at the increased frequency of once every three months to ensure that a sufficiently high level of scrutiny and attention to the child's circumstances is maintained.
- 6.3 As well as those children highlighted 'Red' all other children are also colour coded on the CPT, and Graphs 3 and 4 below show that there has been significant progress over the last year in supporting children and young people to achieve permanence in a timely way. Over half of Cambridgeshire's children in care are now in positions where they have an appropriate legal status and a well-matched, stable placement that they can remain in until independence. This does not include adoption, as adopted children are no longer 'in care' and therefore are not part of the children in care cohort.
- 6.4 These graphs also show that there are still a significant proportion of children and young people who are in need of some action within the system in order to progress towards permanence. These children are at risk of drift and instability within the care system and are the subjects of close attention and often escalations from IROs.

6.5 Graph 3: Permanence overview 2018-19



6.6 Graph 4: Permanence overview 2019-20



IRO Escalations

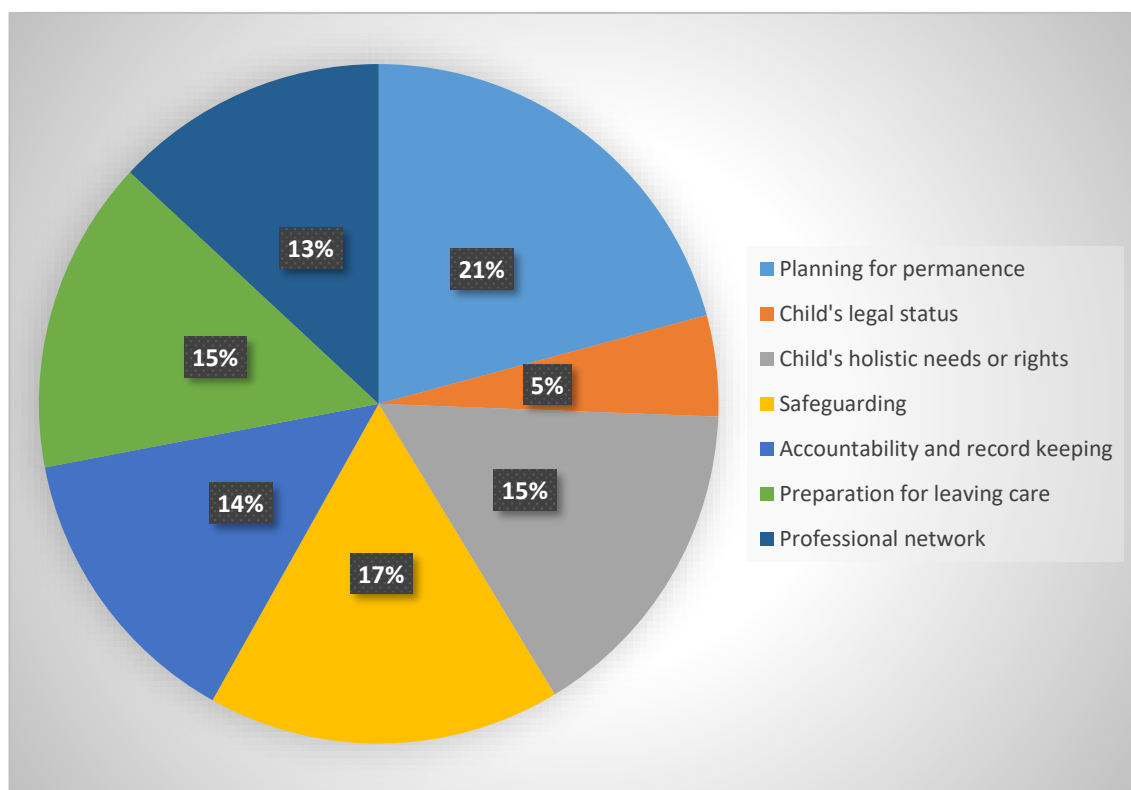
6.7 A core function of the IRO role is to seek resolutions to problems that arise within care planning. It is a statutory responsibility of the IRO Service to have a formal process in place to raise concerns and to ensure that this process is respected and prioritised by managers. In Cambridgeshire this is referred to as the Escalation Protocol.

6.8 The Escalation Protocol was minimally revised again in November 2019 so that it fit well as a mechanism to be used across Cambridgeshire County

Council and Peterborough City Council. It also gave clearer definition to the lower level escalations ('Case Alerts') and formal escalations which required the attention of the Assistant Director ('Dispute Resolution Process' or 'DRP').

- 6.10 Over the 12 months between April 2019 and March 2020 IROs raised 738 escalations to social care managers to prompt them to address the specific issues of drift or delay raised. This is more than double the number of escalations raised the previous year.
- 6.11 Rather than this just indicating an increase in drift and other issues a key factor behind this increase lies in the further embedding of the escalation system with IROs. Over the past year IROs have become more confident to raise relevant issues and senior managers have equally become more responsive when issues are raised.
- 6.12 The types of issues raised by IROs fell loosely into seven categories, as can be seen in Graph 5.

Graph 5: Themes of IRO Escalations



- 6.13 Graph 5 illustrates that most issues raised by IROs were concerned with drift or delay in achieving permanence for children in care. This included, for example, care plans not being updated regularly enough, delays in identifying and assessing long-term compatibility of a child's foster placement (known as 'matching') or delays in sibling assessments.
- 6.14 In terms of the issues around safeguarding that IROs escalated, which was the second most prevalent theme raised, the majority of these related to concerns of overdue visits to children in care.

7.0 Impact of the IRO Service

Impact for children

- 7.1 Regular Reviews by IROs ensure that care plans are progressing for children, and that there is always a meaningful purpose for the child to remain 'in care'.
- 7.2 The escalations raised by IROs, where there are issues causing drift or delay, guarantee immediate management oversight. Increasingly over the year the escalations raised this year were addressed within the deadline set by the IRO (based on the child's timeframe) by the relevant social work Team Manager. This shows that, in the instances where social work practice has fallen below standard the IRO has been instrumental in ensuring plans get back on track quickly.
- 7.3 By the end of March 2020 IROs found that roughly one quarter of their escalations were not adequately dealt with by the Team Manager within the required timeframe. This meant, in order to ensure that the child's needs and rights were being adequately addressed the IRO had to escalate the matter to the Head of Service or further.
- 7.4 Of the 738 escalations raised over the year, 17 had to be escalated by the IRO to the Assistant Director using the formal Dispute Resolution Process (DRP). Overall this was a significant increase from just 6 DRPs raised in 2018/19.
- 7.5 Significant issues raised within DRPs included:
 - A 12-year old's parents had agreed for her to be accommodated (Section 20) but the IRO was concerned that there would be significant concerns for her safety and welfare if her parents withdrew Section 20 consent
 - Following the IROs escalation this child is now the subject of an interim care order
 - One IRO escalated concerns about delayed permanence planning for a 6-year old. The boy had been cared for under a Special Guardianship Order but his Special Guardian had requested him to be accommodated as she no longer felt able to care for him and she withdrew her involvement. Given his young age his IRO believed strongly that the local authority needed to obtain parental responsibility for him.

- The IROs intervention in this case prompted the local authority to issue care proceedings and a prospective adoptive family is now being sought for him
- A 17-year old mum was preparing to leave care. An assessment had concluded that she was parenting well but that she and her young child would need support to move into appropriate accommodation. The IRO was very concerned that just three weeks before the young person was to turn 18 there were not appropriate transition plans in place for moving on and the existing placement was only commissioned to her 18th birthday.
 - The DRP led to an extension in placement funding being agreed in order for focussed planning to take place so that the young mum and her son could be supported to move on appropriately.

Impact for the organisation

- 7.6 The IRO Service constructs and circulates the Positive Practice and Escalation Report each month which summarises the themes of escalations and raises awareness of ongoing areas of practice concern. The report also includes observations of positive practice that have been appreciated by the IRO Service (and Child Protection Chairs) on behalf of children in care each month; thereby offering the wider organisation regular balanced feedback.
- 7.7 Each month the emerging themes with respect to permanence are discussed in Quality of Practice Meetings. This enables dialogue around the broader context for any challenges, and highlights areas for learning and support.
- 7.8 This year specialist responsibilities have been allocated to some of the IRO roles and there are now named IROs who focus on specific issues for children in care. The relevant IRO takes responsibility for keeping abreast of developments in legislation and practice and is established the named link between the IRO team and the respective team within the wider service. We now have IRO links with LAC Health, the Independent Visitor Service, CAFCASS, the Participation Service, the Adoption Team and the Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers Team.

8.0 Feedback on the IRO Service

- 8.1 This year standardised evaluation forms for Reviews were introduced. After the Review the IRO offers the opportunity to the young person, their parents and professionals to complete and return an evaluation form. These are used to help the IRO consider how best to manage the Review for each young person in the future, as well as giving insight to managers about the performance of their staff.

"I am very grateful for IRO as she is very kind and professional"

- 16-yr old unaccompanied asylum seeker

- 8.2 Feedback from young people about their Reviews and their IROs was generally very positive. The majority of young people 'always' felt that their IRO listens to them, 'always' feels their IRO is open and honest and 'always' feels supported during their Reviews.
- 8.3 Parents who returned evaluation forms generally expressed that they felt they were either 'always' or 'mostly' included within their child's Review and that the IRO is 'always' or 'mostly' open or honest with them. Some parents fed back that they were 'not sure' whether a good plan for their child had been agreed through the Review, suggesting that more time may be needed for IROs and social workers to explain to parents the plans that are being progressed for their child.

"The Review was very well organised and I do feel both the IRO and the social worker have a good view on my son"

- Father

- 8.4 Professionals have often completed evaluation forms for Reviews that they participated in, and again the feedback has been predominantly very positive.

“The IRO knows the children and young people well. This allows her to fully understand the children’s lived experiences and ensure that the plan for the child that is being proposed is in the best interests of the child. Her Reviews are well written and decisions are shared quickly, allowing me to move forward with writing the child’s care plan”

- Social worker

“My child’s IRO is right on the button. She always follows up in the Review on tasks that should have been completed since the last Review”

- Foster carer

“I have been really impressed with the IRO’s style of working. I have several cases with her which have had a few issues and she has always ensured that the needs of the children are kept at the centre of our working. Thus far, all the foster carers I work with who have this IRO have had nothing but positive comments to make about her. I just wanted to show my appreciation to her for always advocating for the children and escalating matters when things have drifted.

- Fostering Supervising Social Worker

- 8.5 Following the Focussed Visit in January 2020 Ofsted recognised that “Additional oversight and scrutiny are provided by independent reviewing officers, who keep track of what is happening in children’s lives.”

9.0 Review of the IRO Service Action Plan 2019/20

9.1 Objective 1

IROs to support children in care to have greater opportunities to influence standards of professional practice and decision making by:

- Improving working relationships and partnership work with Voices Matter (Cambridgeshire's Children in Care Council);
- IROs to audit one care plan per month, in conjunction with the young person, with feedback to be shared with the relevant social work team;
- Children and young people to be offered feedback forms with respect to their IRO and their management of the CIC Review.

Outcome:

Children and young people are now routinely offered feedback forms at the end of each of their Reviews, which has been able to contribute to service planning and staff development moving forward. Over the year discussions have begun about how to strengthen the connection between the IRO Service and Voices Matter, though unfortunately the pace of these has been impacted by the recent covid-lockdown. Equally the IRO care plan audits have not been able to get fully underway and so this will be an objective to be achieved in 2020/21.

9.2 Objective 2

IRO Service to improve opportunities for feedback from birth parents, carers and other professionals with respect to the CIC Reviews and IRO practice.

Outcome:

Standard feedback forms are now shared with parents and professionals after Reviews and these are now embedded into the Review process. The return rate of feedback forms is very good generally and the detail of the comments has been useful in ongoing evaluation of our service delivery.

9.3 Objective 3

IROs to record information about compliance with respect to completion of required documentation and arrangements of Reviews. This will provide

qualitative feedback to Social Work Team Managers in respect of focussed care planning, to be shared in the supervision with social workers.

Outcome:

IROs now routinely complete a 'Monitoring Form' after each Review, giving added quality and compliance control to their case management overview at least once every six months. Each Monitoring Form is shared with Social Work Team Manager for them to use as a tool for discussion and performance management within supervision with the child's social worker.

9.4 Objective 4

To support the local authority to develop pro-active models of working to enhance placement stability for children and reduce instances of placement breakdown and multiple moves for children, by:

- Conducting a service-wide review of recent Placement Breakdowns;
- IRO Service taking responsibility for holding Placement Breakdown Meetings;
- IRO to support Corporate Parenting to review matching procedures for assessing long-term 'matches'.

Outcome:

Placement Breakdown Meetings for children in foster care are now undertaken by the IRO Service. A service-wide review has been undertaken and is awaiting approval for sharing with Corporate Parenting to support them with ongoing service development.

9.5 Objective 5

Introduction of specialist roles and duties for IROs, to broaden their influence across the service and promote the voice of the child.

Outcome:

Some specialist roles have now been developed within the IRO Team and plans are being prepared to build on these relationships further as the service begins to plan for taking steps towards face-to-face service delivery again.

9.6 Objective 6

IRO Service to support the organisation to improve standards and consistency in returning children to the care of their parents where appropriate. The IRO Service will do this by:

- The IRO Service Manager, (or a representing IRO) to join senior managers to oversee the consistency in standard and quality of reunification assessments and plans for return home at regular Reunification Monitoring Meetings;
- IROs to support the development of a Return Home Policy;
- IRO Service Manager (or a representing IRO) to contribute to Reunification training across the service, to reinforce expectations with respect to quality of Assessments and Plans.

Outcome:

There have been delays in the progression of this objective this year. Reunification training has not yet been rolled out and conversations with Corporate Parenting will continue as to how to continue to work together to focus on the process of Reunification when this is the right pathway for a child.

9.7 Objective 7

To ensure the child's voice is strongly heard through the care planning and Review process, so that children can have a leading influence on their care plans by:

- Increasing the proportion of children who are consulted by the IRO prior to their Review.

Outcome

IROs continue to work hard to visit and speak to as many children as possible prior to their Reviews. Unfortunately the switch from the ONE system to Liquid Logic in January has meant that currently exact data around consultation cannot be measured and such a report is under construction. Visits are routinely discussed in supervision and so managers are reassured that IROs are visiting children.

9.8 Objective 8

To ensure children's needs regarding dental and health assessments, and risk assessments around Child Criminal Exploitation or going missing are

undertaken as appropriate by responsible social work teams. IROs will do this by:

- Increasing oversight of records of assessments, both as part of regular CIC Reviews and interim monitoring.

Outcome

IROs oversight of relevant assessments has improved through the implementation of Liquid Logic, and through the routine Monitoring Forms completed by IROs after each Review.

10.0 IRO Service Action Plan 2020/21

10.1 Objective 1

To further strengthen the relationship between the IRO Service and Voices Matter (Cambridgeshire's Children in Care Council). A representative from the IRO Service will meet with a group of young people at least once in the year (potentially through the Just Us groups or Voices Matter) to gain feedback on their views of the service and how CIC Reviews are run.

10.2 Objective 2

To evaluate the new ways of working that have been established in response to covid-19 restrictions, and preserve the elements that have proven to be effective for children. This includes careful analysis of the potential benefits of communicating with young people via video or social media and being adaptive and creative in planning Reviews.

10.3 Objective 3

To further improve the feedback loop with respect to the comments received from children and young people after their Reviews. This year the service plans to record young people's feedback using a systematic tool so that themes can be collated and analysed. This will support service development and give opportunities to feed back to young people to demonstrate the value of their feedback.

10.4 Objective 4

To establish a routine for IROs to regularly meet with young people to co-audit their care plans and pathway plans. This will enable IROs to use their skills to support young people to quality assure their own plans and to raise issues if there are points within plans which the young person feels are unrealistic, do not meet their specific needs or do not relate to their own personal goals.

10.5 Objective 5

To collate and analyse information gathered from Placement Breakdown Meetings for children in foster care. Findings can be incorporated into a bi-annual Report which can then inform further learning and development for Corporate Parenting.

Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee Workshop and Training Plan 2017/18

Summary

Each committee at the County Council has its own training plan to help its members learn more about the business that the Committee covers. Each training session is listed and a record is kept of which members of the committee attend.

	Subject	Desired Learning Outcome/ Success Measures	Priority	Date	Responsibility	Nature of Training	Audience	Attendance by:	% of Elected Members Attending
1.	We are all Corporate Parents	To discuss councillors' role and responsibilities as Corporate Parents.	High	12.01.18	<i>Fiona MacKirdy, Head of County Wide and Looked After Children</i>	Seminar	All county councillors	Cllr Bradnam Cllr Costello Cllr Cuffley Cllr Every Cllr Hay Cllr Joseph Cllr Whitehead (only members and subs of CPSC shown)	80%
2.	Looked After Children and Care Leavers	To brief Members on all areas of the Council's work in relation to looked after children and care leavers	High	11.04.18	<i>Jacqui Barry, Service Development Manager, District Safeguarding Manager</i>	Presentation and discussion	Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee members	Cllr Every Cllr Hay Cllr Bradnam Cllr Richards Cllr Cuffley	80%

3.	Safeguarding training and visit to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	To refresh and update Members' safeguarding training and offer them the chance to see first-hand the work being done at the MASH.	High	11.04.18	<i>Lou Williams, Service Director, Jenny Goodes, Head of Service – Integrated Front Door</i>	Presentation, tour of facilities and discussions with staff	Children and Young People Committee and Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee members and substitute members	Cllr Every Cllr Hay Cllr Bradnam Cllr Cuffley	60%
4.	Corporate Parenting Strategy refresh	To discuss corporate parenting strategies going forward.	High	12.06.18	Jacqui Barry	Workshop	Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee members	Cllr Every Cllr Hay	40%
5.	Fostering	To meet Service Managers and discuss current practice and future developments.	Medium	24.07.18 17.04.19	John Heron, Residential and Placements Provision Manager	Presentation/workshop	Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee members	Cllr Every Cllr Bradnam Cllr Richards	60%
6.	Mental Health	To include developmental trauma and mental health, parent infant mental health, school aged children, adolescence and mental health and resilience	High	22.01.19	Pam Parker, Clinical Psychology Lead	Presentation and Workshop	Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee members	Cllrs Bradnam, Costello and Every	60%
7.	The Local Offer for Care Leavers/ Access to Universal Credit and	To brief Members on the Local Offer and benefits	Medium	14.06.19	Kate Knight, Lead Corporate Parenting	Members' Seminar	All Members	Cllrs Ashwood, Bailey, Boden, Bradnam, Bywater, Costello, Count,	80%

	benefits for care leavers	available to care leavers			Manager/ DWP officers			Criswell, Every, French, Gowing, Hay, Hunt, Rogers, Sanderson, Wotherspoon	
8.	Permanence planning for children	To brief Members on the importance of permanence planning for children	High	03.10.19	Kate Knight Lead Corporate Parenting manager/Julie Ann Saunders/John Heron	Training session	Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee members	Cllrs Every, Hay and Bradnam	
9.	Missing and Exploited Children - Being and Feeling Safe Training Workshop	To brief Members and provide training on missing and exploited children	Medium	19 February 2020 (to link with the March theme of feeling and being Safe)	Dave Sergeant	Workshop	Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee	Cllrs Every, Hay, Bradnam, Costello and Meschini	100%
10.	The Role of the Personal Advisor and update on the Local Offer	To brief Members of the role of the Personal Advisors and specialist PA roles in the context of the Local offer and opportunity to meet with PA's	Medium	April TBC (to link with the May meeting theme of Preparing for Adulthood)	Joe Gilbert Local Offer Personal Advisor				
11.	Care Leavers	Members' Seminar	Medium	12 June 2020	Joe Gilbert Local Offer Personal Advisor	Members' Seminar	All Members		
12.	Case Studies for Wraparound Care	The Reunification and Placement Stability Service will deliver Members' training on the work they do to reunify	Medium	October 2020 (to link with the November meeting theme of Achieving	The Reunification and Placement Stability Service	Training session	Sub-Committee All Members TBC		

		children with their birth family where it is safe to do so. This training will include an overview of research that has been commissioned by the Corporate Parenting Service on this topic and will also include case studies, with specific focus on Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH).		Stability and Permanence)						
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**CORPORATE PARENTING
SUB-COMMITTEE
FORWARD
AGENDA PLAN**

Agenda Item No: 12

Summary

The Forward Agenda Plan shows the dates and times of future meetings, where they will be held and what reports will be considered.

Committee date	Agenda item	Lead officer	Reference if key decision	Deadline for draft reports to Assistant Service Director	Approved reports to Democratic Services by
Wednesday 15 July 2020 – Virtual Meeting - Theme: Hearing the voices of children and young people					
	Notification of the Chair and Vice Chair for the Municipal Year 2020/21	Democratic Services	Not applicable		
	Minutes and Action Log	Democratic Services	Not applicable		
	Proposals for Future Engagement with Children in Care and Care Leavers and the format of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee	N Curley	Not applicable		
	Young People's Participation (standing item)	S Smith	Not applicable		
	Independent Reviewing Officer's Annual Report	O Grant	Not applicable		

Committee date	Agenda item	Lead officer	Reference if key decision	Deadline for draft reports to Assistant Service Director	Approved reports to Democratic Services by
	Corporate Parenting Scorecard	N Curley	Not applicable		
	Foster Carer reporting to the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee	F van den Hout	Not applicable		
	Sub-Committee Workshop/ Training Plan (standing item)	F van den Hout	Not applicable		
	Agenda Plan	Democratic Services	Not applicable		
Wednesday 9 September 2020 – 4.00pm Room 128, Shire Hall, Cambridge (TBC) – Theme TBC					
	Minutes and Action Log	Democratic Services	Not applicable		
	Young People's Participation (standing item)	C Betteridge	Not applicable		
	Performance Report (approx. quarterly)	K Knight	Not applicable		
	Draft Annual Corporate Parenting Report 2019/20	F van den Hout	Not applicable		
	Sub-Committee Workshop/ Training Plan (standing item)	F van den Hout	Not applicable		
	Virtual School Headteacher's report	C Hiorns	Not applicable		
	Agenda Plan	Democratic Services	Not applicable		

Committee date	Agenda item	Lead officer	Reference if key decision	Deadline for draft reports to Assistant Service Director	Approved reports to Democratic Services by
Wednesday 18 November 2020 - 4.00pm Room 128, Shire Hall, Cambridge (TBC) Theme: Achieving Permanence and Stability					
	Minutes and Action Log	Democratic Services	Not applicable		
	Young People's Participation <i>(standing item)</i>	C Betteridge	Not applicable		
	Sub-Committee Workshop/ Training Plan <i>(standing item)</i>	F van den Hout	Not applicable		
	Siblings Forever Annual Report	O Grant	Not applicable		
	Agenda Plan	Democratic Services	Not applicable		
Wednesday 13 January 2021 - 4.00pm Room 128, Shire Hall, Cambridge Theme: Being healthy and living a healthy lifestyle					
	Minutes and Action Log	Democratic Services	Not applicable		
	Young People's Participation <i>(standing item)</i>	C Betteridge	Not applicable		
	Performance Report <i>(approx. quarterly)</i>	K Knight	Not applicable		
	Sub-Committee Workshop/ Training Plan <i>(standing item)</i>	F van den Hout	Not applicable		
	Virtual School: Unvalidated Results	C Hiorns	Not applicable		
	Agenda Plan	Democratic Services	Not applicable		

Committee date	Agenda item	Lead officer	Reference if key decision	Deadline for draft reports to Assistant Service Director	Approved reports to Democratic Services by
Wednesday 24 March 2021 - 4.00pm Room 128, Shire Hall, Cambridge (TBC) Theme: Being and feeling safe					
	Minutes and Action Log	Democratic Services	Not applicable		
	Young People's Participation <i>(standing item)</i>	C Betteridge	Not applicable		
	Sub-Committee Workshop/ Training Plan <i>(standing item)</i>	F van den Hout	Not applicable		
	Agenda Plan	Democratic Services	Not applicable		
Wednesday 9 June 2021 – 4.00pm Room 128, Shire Hall, Cambridge (TBC) Theme: Hearing the voices of children and young people					
	Minutes and Action Log	Democratic Services	Not applicable		
	Young People's Participation <i>(standing item)</i>	C Betteridge	Not applicable		
	Performance Report <i>(approx. quarterly)</i>	K Knight	Not applicable		
	Sub-Committee Workshop/ Training Plan <i>(standing item)</i>	F van den Hout	Not applicable		
	Agenda Plan	Democratic Services	Not applicable		