

# CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE



**Date: Wednesday, 13 December 2017**

Democratic and Members' Services  
Quentin Baker  
LGSS Director: Lawand Governance

**16:00hr**

Shire Hall  
Castle Hill  
Cambridge  
CB3 0AP

**Room 128**

**Shire Hall, Castle Hill, Cambridge, CB3 0AP**

## AGENDA

Open to Public and Press

- 1 Notification of the Chairman and Vice Chairman**  
To note the appointment by the Children and Young People Committee of Councillor Lis Every as Chairman and Councillor Anne Hay as Vice Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee for the remainder of the 2017/18 municipal year.
- 2 Apologies for absence and declarations of interest**  
*Guidance on declaring interests is available at <http://tinyurl.com/ccs-conduct-code>*
- 3 Co-option of Young People's Representatives** **5 - 8**
- 4 The Role and Responsibilities of Corporate Parents** **9 - 12**
- 5 Performance Report** **13 - 18**
- 6 Forward Agenda Plan** **19 - 28**

- 7 Sub-Committee Workshop/ Training Plan**  
To follow, subject to the Chairman's agreement.
- 8 Fostering Service Annual Report** **29 - 62**
- 9 Young People's Participation**  
To follow, subject to the Chairman's agreement.
- 10 Virtual School Report** **63 - 70**
- 11 Date of Next Meeting**  
To be arranged.

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 Claire Richards

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

Clerk Name: Richenda Greenhill

Clerk Telephone: 01223 699171

Clerk Email: [Richenda.Greenhill@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Richenda.Greenhill@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

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Public speaking on the agenda items above is encouraged. Speakers must register their intention to speak by contacting the Democratic Services Officer no later than 12.00 noon three working days before the meeting. Full details of arrangements for public speaking are set out in Part 4, Part 4.4 of the Council's Constitution <https://tinyurl.com/CCCprocedure>.

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**CO-OPTION OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S REPRESENTATIVES**

**To:** Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

**Meeting Date:** 13 December 2017

**From:** Fiona Mackirdy  
Head of Countywide and Looked After Children's services

**Electoral division(s):** All

**Purpose:** To advise the sub-committee on progress in identifying young people to be co-opted members

**Recommendation:** The Committee is asked to note the report and indicate views on the proposed way forward

<b><i>Officer contact:</i></b>	<b><i>Member contact:</i></b>
Name: <b>Fiona Mackirdy</b>	Names: Councillor Lis Every
Post: Head of Countywide and Looked After Children's Services	Role: Chairman, Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee
Email: Fiona.mackirdy@cambridgeshire.gov.uk	Email: Lis.Every@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01223 715576	Tel: (office) 01223 706398

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Sub-Committee has been constituted in such a way as to enable two young people with recent (within the past 5 years) experience of being a looked after child or care leaver to be co-opted members of the panel

## **2. MAIN ISSUES**

- 2.1 Officers met with the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board which preceded this Sub-Committee to consider how best to enable young people to become co-opted members of the Sub-Committee.
- 2.2 Views were also sought from the Voices Matter group by the Chair and the Chairman of the Children and Young Peoples' Committee. This group is the Cambridgeshire Children in Care Council.
- 2.3 As a matter of principle Members, officers and young people wanted to open up this opportunity to as many young people with care experience as possible which may be wider than the current cohort on the Voices Matter group or those attending looked after children's participation groups.
- 2.4 It was recognised that some thought as to those young people who may be best able to participate was needed as identified below:
- Young people would probably need to be aged over 12
  - As membership of the Sub-Committee is published, and records are in the public domain, children and young people would need to be happy that they were identified as someone with care experience, and that no safeguarding issues would arise from them being publically identified as such
  - Given young people's commitments some thought is needed on how young people's views can be represented if the co-opted members are unable to attend a meeting
  - Officers needed to provide as much support as was necessary to individuals, including young people who may have disabilities
- 2.5 It was proposed that the Service Development and Commissioning Manager would write to all young people aged over 12 to outline this opportunity and to seek interest that could then be followed up with direct contact. This written contact would be in a young-person friendly and attractive format. Foster carers, care settings, social worker and Independent Reviewing Officers would also be made aware of the opportunity so that they could publicise or nominate young people.

## **3. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

### **3.1 Resource Implications**

None

### **3.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications**

None

**3.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications**

None

**3.4 Equality and Diversity Implications**

None

**3.5 Engagement and Communications Implications**

None

**3.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement**

None

**3.7 Public Health Implications**

None

**SOURCE DOCUMENTS**

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
<i>None</i>	



**THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CORPORATE PARENTS**

*To:* **Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee**

*Meeting Date:* **13<sup>th</sup> December 2017**

*From:* **Sarah-Jane Smedmor  
Assistant Director Children and Families**

*Purpose:* **This report outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Corporate Parent.**

*Recommendation:* **The Committee is asked to note the roles and responsibilities of the Corporate Parent for Cambridgeshire's Looked After Children.**

<b><i>Officer contact:</i></b>	<b><i>Member contact:</i></b>
Name: Sarah-Jane Smedmor Post: Assistant Director Children and Families Childrens Services Email: Sarah-jane.smedmor@cambridgeshire.gov.uk Tel: 01223 699920	Names: Councillor Lis Every Role: Chairman, Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee Email: Lis.Every@cambridgeshire.gov.uk Tel: (office) 01223 706398

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 A raft of legislation including the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004 have successively strengthened public bodies' responsibilities to looked after children. Statutory Guidance issued by the Department for Education in 2012 also specifically laid out the statutory roles of Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services to cover both the social care and education services of the local authority. These individuals should provide strong leadership and ensure that there is a clear line of accountability for children's well-being. They have particular responsibility for vulnerable groups of children, including those for whom they are corporate parents. The Lead Member should provide *political* leadership whilst the Director of Children's Services should provide *professional* leadership.
- 1.2 Although not a statutory requirement, most local authorities have established a group of elected members to oversee the corporate parenting function of the local authority. All councillors and council officers share corporate parenting responsibility and cannot abdicate this responsibility in favour of those they see as being more central, but this does not mean that everyone has the same role
- 1.3 Cambridgeshire County Council established a Corporate Parenting Board comprising elected members nominated by the Children and Young People's Committee, invited officers and representatives from the Voices Matter looked after children's group.

## 2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Board has been re-constituted as the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee of the Children and Young People (CYP) Committee. This clarifies and strengthens arrangements for oversight and decision making in respect of corporate parenting by having clear accountability to the CYP Committee, a scheme of delegated authority and framework for decision making in respect of Corporate Parenting.
- 2.2 When a child comes into the care of the Local Authority, they become what is known as being Looked after Children and the County Council becomes the child's corporate parent. The term corporate parent means the collective responsibility of the council, elected members, employees and partner agencies for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after and those who are care leavers, by the council. A child in the care of the Council looks to the whole Council to be the best parent it can be to the child. Every member and employee of the Council has the statutory responsibility to act for the child in the same way a good parent would act for their child.
- 2.3 Corporate parents champion every opportunity to help young people in care to achieve their full potential and to have a successful transition into adulthood. Corporate parents seek to provide the necessary life skills, experience and confidence for our young people to thrive.
- 2.4 To ensure Corporate Parents have the best possible information about all of the Children and Young People Looked After in Cambridgeshire and care leavers, it is essential to hear first-hand from those children and young people who have been Looked After, as to their experiences. Information regarding children's health and emotional wellbeing, education and accommodation will be provided by Officers.

- 2.5 Information from the Voices Matter Panel, who are an established and highly successful group of young people who have been or are still Looked After, will be shared on a regular basis with the Corporate Parenting Sub Committee.
- 2.6 The question for us all as Corporate Parents is, 'Would this be good enough for my child?' Our Looked After Children should feel cared about, not just cared for.

**3. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 Corporate Parenting activity needs to be strengthened by
  - An increased effectiveness of the corporate parenting function through challenge, scrutiny and clear decision making supported by good performance data and outcomes reporting.
  - Consistent and clear engagement in the corporate parenting agenda by officers across the council (including other Directorates), Elected Members and partners.
  - Greater join-up by all parts of the Council and in all committees of the Council in thinking about how decisions affect those children in the council’s care.
  - Greater consideration as to how the voices of children and care leavers are heard and considered as part of Corporate Parenting processes, including engagement by Elected Members and Officers with the Children in Care Council (Voices Matter).

**SOURCE DOCUMENTS**

Source Documents	Location
<p><b>Children Act 1989- in particular Care Planning Regulations for Looked After Children</b></p> <p><b>Working Together 2015</b></p>	<p>Department for Education</p>



**PERFORMANCE REPORT**

**To:** Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

**Meeting Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> December 2017

**From:** Jacqui Barry  
Service Development and Commissioning Manager

**Electoral division(s):** All

**Purpose:** To report on the performance of services for Looked After children and care leavers - as required in legislation and fulfilling the purpose of monitoring and offering advice.

**Recommendation:** The Sub-Committee is asked to:

- a) consider the data
- b) highlight key themes
- c) review the performance and outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- d) identify any additional information Members would want to see included in future reports

<b><i>Officer contact:</i></b>		<b><i>Member contacts:</i></b>	
Name:	Jacqui Barry	Names:	Councillor Lis Every
Post:	Service Development and Commissioning Manager	Post:	Chairman, Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee
Email:	<a href="mailto:Jacqui.barry@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Jacqui.barry@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>	Email:	<a href="mailto:Lis.Every@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Lis.Every@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>
Tel:	07891965689	Tel:	01223 706398

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The following information is provided to inform the Sub-Committee of the numbers of children and young people currently being looked after by the Council and a breakdown of their placements, including comparative information for previous months as well as some key activity data
- 1.2 This Data-Set will expand in content and analysis over the next year.

## 2. MAIN ISSUES

### 2.1

LAC Numbers							
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Total	685	675	681	689	687	697	695
LAC - Non UASC	619	613	614	623	622	629	626
LAC - UASC	66	61	67	66	65	68	69
UASC %	9.6%	9.0%	9.8%	9.6%	9.5%	9.8%	9.9%
Rate per 10,000	51.49	50.74	51.19	51.79	51.64	52.39	52.20
BLA - (county only)	21	17	13	36	31	26	22
CLA - (county only)	17	26	19	38	22	23	25
LAC Visits							
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Children to be visited	465	471	495	466	503	462	477
No. not seen in timescale	138	93	88	61	105	85	56
% visited	70.3%	80.3%	82.2%	86.9%	79.1%	81.6%	88.3%
3 or more placements during the year (cumulative)							
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
No. of LAC with 3+ moves	1	8	12	20	31	37	45
% with 3+ moves	0.1%	1.2%	1.8%	2.9%	4.5%	5.3%	6.5%
Target - (County Target only)	0.4%	0.8%	1.3%	1.7%	2.1%	2.5%	2.9%
Children placed out of county (not incl: UASC)							
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
LAC placed out of county	272	276	330		277	261	271
% placed out of county	43.9%	45.0%	53.7%		44.5%	41.5%	43.3%
LAC placed out of county & 20 miles +	196	199	195		206	195	203
% placed out of county & 20 miles +	72.1%	72.1%	59.1%		74.4%	74.7%	74.9%
UASC placed out of county							
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
UASC placed out of county	47	46	50		46	51	52
% UASC placed out of county	71.2%	75.4%	74.6%		70.8%	75.0%	75.4%
Reviews - county level							
Late Reviews this month	5						

Cumulative late reviews	29
LAC Reviews due in the month	186
% reviews in timescale	97.3%

### Under 16 - LAC for 2.5 yrs and same placement 2 years

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
% of cohort	69.5%				68.4%	69.5%	71.0%

### Aged 10-15 - LAC in foster placements or placed for adoption

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
% of cohort	84.9%				79.9%	84.9%	84.6%

### Children who ceased to be LAC because they were adopted

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Total adopted	2	6	1	4	0	1	2
No. ceased LAC	17	26	19	38	22	23	25
% ceased LAC due to adoption	11.8%	23.1%	5.3%	10.5%	0.0%	4.3%	8.0%

### Adoption Timescales

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
No of Adoptions	2	6	1	4	0	1	2
Average time between child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family	365	310	938	352	N/A	168	381
Average time between an LA receiving court authority to place a child and the LA deciding on a match	146	127	757	132	N/A	46	179
Children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family	100%	100%	0%	100%	N/A	100%	100%

### Aged 17-21 - to calculate

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Care leaver cohort	27	30	21	27	20	15	
Care leavers in suitable accommodation - Yes	15	16	16	14	10	13	
Care leavers in suitable accommodation - Unknown	10	12	3	3	1	0	
Care leavers who are EET -Yes	6	5	9	13	8	9	
Care leavers who are EET - Unknown	10	12	3	3	1	0	
Care leavers in touch - Yes	23	21	21	23	18	12	
Care leavers in touch - RHOM	2	2	0	1	0	0	
Care leavers in touch - NREQ	0	2	0	0	0	0	

- 2.2 The number of looked after children has increased only marginally since the beginning of the year. 9.9% of the looked after population is made up of unaccompanied asylum seeking children. 6.5% of children have moved placements three times, but some of these moves are to permanent placements such as adoption or to long term fostering where children's care plans are to remain looked after until 18. 71% of looked after children have been in their placements for two and a half or more years. These children are most likely to be settled with their foster family, attending the right school, seeing their family at specified times and having their health and emotional needs met. 16 children have been adopted since April. All children who are adopted become so within 14 months of entering care, meaning that their future is secured without unnecessary delay. 43% of children are placed out of County and more than 20 miles from our borders. These children can experience delay in having a health assessment (carried out by the area in which the child resides).
- 2.3 Information about children's health is collated, but not currently available within this dataset. This will be rectified by the next Sub-Committee. This will be needed in future for members to evaluate and track children's experiences.

### **3. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

#### **3.1 Resource Implications**

The number of Children looked after increased by 1.4% since April. For the same period in 2016, the increase was 2.6%. Social workers and other staff are travelling distances to visit children placed out of County. Many of these children are in Independent Fostering Agency placements due to a lack of in-house provision that can meet their needs and this adds pressure on the placement budget.

#### **3.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications**

None

#### **3.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications**

Ofsted will consider the data and analysis available to the Sub-Committee when considering the effectiveness of the council's Corporate Parenting Function.

#### **3.4 Equality and Diversity Implications**

All children who become looked after have access to the same service provision irrespective of their age, gender and ethnicity. There is a gap in suitable in-County provision for children and young people seeking asylum, with the majority of placements located in Peterborough.

#### **3.5 Engagement and Communications Implications**

None

#### **3.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement**

Relevant to all Members in the role as corporate parents.

### 3.7 Public Health Implications

None

#### **SOURCE DOCUMENTS**

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>Children's Service Performance Dashboard.</b>	Matthew Tullett, Business Analyst Shire Hall, Cambridge  <a href="mailto:Matthew.Tullett@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Matthew.Tullett@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>



**FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

**To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee**

**Meeting Date: 13 December 2017**

**From: Richenda Greenhill  
Democratic Services Officer**

**Electoral division(s): All**

**Purpose: To ask Members to consider the Sub-Committee's future programme of work and the frequency and timing of meetings.**

**Recommendation: The Sub-Committee is asked to:**

- a) Review and comment on the draft Forward Agenda Plan attached at Appendix 1;**
- b) Discuss additional items to add to be added to the Forward Agenda Plan;**
- c) Agree to meet bi-monthly for the remainder of the current municipal year and to set provisional bi-monthly meeting dates for 2018/19.**

<b><i>Officer contact:</i></b>		<b><i>Member contact:</i></b>	
Name:	Richenda Greenhill	Names:	Councillor Lis Every
Post:	Democratic Services Officer	Role:	Chairman, Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee
Email:	Richenda.Greenhill@cambridgeshire.gov.uk	Email:	Lis.Every@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel:	01223 699171	Tel:	(office) 01223 706398

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Forward Agenda Plan will set out the reports to be considered by the Sub-Committee at each of its public meetings. It is a live document which will be updated regularly to respond to the focus and priorities of Members. It will be a standing agenda item at each meeting.

## 2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 On 17 October 2017 Council agreed that the Corporate Parenting Board should become a sub-committee of the Children and Young People (CYP) Committee. The full report is available via the link below and Item 7(a) refers:  
<https://cmis.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/ccclive/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/650/Committee/20/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>. The Sub-Committee's terms of reference are attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Members are asked to review the draft Forward Agenda Plan attached at Appendix 2 and to agree priorities and the timing of items for the future work programme. Possible future business items include:
- Corporate Parenting Data Set
  - CORAM Cambridgeshire Adoption Annual Report (due to go to CYP next in summer 2018)
  - Refresh of the Corporate Parenting Strategy
  - Virtual School (standing item)
  - Mental Health/ Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMH)
  - Health Assessment Issues
  - Access to Further and Higher Education - current data and experience of young people. What can be done to further improve outcomes.
  - Employment – current data and experience of young people. What can be done to further improve outcomes
  - Outreach
  - Foster Carer Recruitment
  - Workforce Development Plans
  - Independent Reviewing Officers' Report
  - Bright Spots(6 monthly): developed by Coram Voice with the aim of improving the wellbeing of children and young people in care by identifying and promoting practices that have a positive influence on the them
- 2.3 Members are also asked to consider the frequency and timing of future meetings. It is recommended that the Sub-Committee should initially hold public meetings bi-monthly and that this should be reviewed at the end of the current municipal year. This would be supplemented by additional workshops, training and visits as required. Given the pressure on Members' diaries it is also recommended that provisional bi-monthly public meeting dates be set now for the 2018/19 municipal year.
- 2.4 To accommodate the educational or work commitments of the Sub-Committee's two young people's representatives it is recommended that meetings are held between 4.00-6.00pm.

### 3. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

#### 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**

Source Documents	Location
Report to Council 17.10.17: Item 7(a) Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee	<a href="https://cmis.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/ccs_live/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/650/Committee/20/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx">https://cmis.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/ccs_live/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/650/Committee/20/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx</a>



## CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMITTEE: TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Children and Young People Committee shall establish a Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee with the following membership and powers:

### Membership

*Any five members (including substitutes) of the Children and Young People Committee, subject to political proportionality. The Chairman/woman and Vice-Chairman/woman of the Sub-Committee shall be selected and appointed by the Children and Young People Committee.*

Two non-voting co-opted young people with recent (within the last five years), direct experience of being looked after by, or receiving services as a care leaver from Cambridgeshire County Council. The usual rules for substitution as set out in the Council Procedure Rules shall apply.

### Overview of Functions

The Sub-Committee has delegated authority to exercise all the Council's functions relating to the delivery, by or on behalf of, the County Council, of Corporate Parenting functions with the exception of policy decisions which will remain with the Children and Young People's Committee

<b>Delegated Authority</b>	<b>Delegation/Condition</b>
Authority for exercising management, oversight and delivery of services to looked after children and care leavers in relation to their care, wellbeing, education and health, including delivery of the Council's Pledge to looked after children.	
Authority for the functions and powers conferred on or exercisable by the County Council as Local Authority in relation to Corporate Parenting operational matters excluding policy decisions	

Delegated Authority	Delegation/Condition
<p>Authority for working with the Virtual School in relation to raising standards of attainment and developing education, employment and training opportunities for looked after children, former looked after children and care leavers.</p>	
<p>Authority for exercising management, oversight and delivery of services to looked after children, former looked after children and care leavers including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District and Countywide Early Help and Social work services</li> <li>• Fostering and adoption services</li> <li>• Commissioning of external services</li> <li>• Residential and outreach services</li> <li>• Contact services</li> </ul>	
<p>Authority for ensuring mechanisms for consultation and participation are positively promoted for looked after children and care leavers and that the Council actively listens and responds to the views and experiences of these children and young people, including those with disabilities and very young children.</p>	
<p>Authority to receive regular reports on the provision of services for Looked After children and care leavers - as required in legislation and fulfilling the purpose of monitoring and offering advice.</p>	
<p>Authority for working with the Clinical Commissioning Group and health providers to ensure delivery of services to meet health needs including health assessments and plans, emotional health, sexual health, substance misuse and teenage pregnancy.</p>	

**DRAFT CORPORATE  
PARENTING SUB-  
COMMITTEE FORWARD  
AGENDA PLAN**

Published 4 December 2017

<b>Committee date</b>	<b>Agenda item</b>	<b>Lead officer</b>	<b>Reference if key decision</b>	<b>Deadline for draft reports</b>	<b>Agenda despatch date</b>
<b>13/12/17</b>	Notification of the Chairman/ woman and Vice Chairman/ woman and committee membership	Democratic Services	Not applicable		
	Co-opted Members	Democratic Services	Not applicable		
	Statutory Duties in relation to Corporate Parenting and Monitoring Arrangements	S-J Smedmor	Not applicable		
	Performance Report and Sufficiency Strategy <i>(standing item – tbc)</i>	S-J Smedmor/ T Barden	Not applicable		
	Forward Agenda Plan	Democratic Services	Not applicable		
	Sub-Committee Workshop/ Training Plan	F MacKirdy/ J Barry	Not applicable		
	Fostering Annual Report 2016-17	F MacKirdy	Not applicable		
	Young People’s Participation <i>(standing item tbc)</i>	J Barry	Not applicable		
	Virtual School <i>(Standing item - tbc)</i>	J Pallett	Not applicable		
<b>February 2018 tbc</b>	Co-option of Two Young People’s Representatives	Democratic Services	Not applicable		
	Minutes of the meeting on 13 December 2017	Democratic Services	Not applicable		

<b>Committee date</b>	<b>Agenda item</b>	<b>Lead officer</b>	<b>Reference if key decision</b>	<b>Deadline for draft reports</b>	<b>Agenda despatch date</b>
	Action Log	Democratic Services	Not applicable		
	Performance Report and Sufficiency Strategy <i>(standing item – tbc)</i>	S-J Smedmor/ T Barden	Not applicable		
	Sub-Committee Workshop/ Training Plan	F MacKirdy/ J Barry	Not applicable		
	Young People’s Participation <i>(standing item tbc)</i>	J Barry	Not applicable		
	Virtual School <i>Standing item – tbc)</i>	J Pallett	Not applicable		
<b>April 2018 tbc</b>	Minutes and Action Log	Democratic Services	Not applicable		
	Minutes of the meeting on xx February 2018	Democratic Services	Not applicable		
	Action Log	Democratic Services	Not applicable		
	Performance Report and Sufficiency Strategy <i>(standing item – tbc)</i>	S-J Smedmor/ T Barden	Not applicable		
	Sub-Committee Workshop/ Training Plan <i>(standing item – tbc)</i>	F MacKirdy/ J Barry	Not applicable		
	Young People’s Participation <i>(standing item tbc)</i>	J Barry	Not applicable		
	Virtual School <i>Standing item – tbc)</i>	J Pallett	Not applicable		

**Notice made under the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 in compliance with Regulation 5(7)**

1. At least 28 clear days before a private meeting of a decision-making body, public notice should be given which must include a statement of reasons for the meeting to be held in private.
2. At least 5 clear days before a private meeting of a decision-making body, further public notice must be given which must include a statement of reasons for the meeting to be held in private, details of any representations received by the decision-making body about why the meeting should be open to the public and a statement of the Council's response to such representations.

<b>Forward plan reference</b>	<b>Intended date of decision</b>	<b>Matter in respect of which the decision is to be made</b>	<b>Decision maker</b>	<b>List of documents to be submitted to the decision maker</b>	<b>Reason for the meeting to be held in private</b>

**Decisions to be made in private as a matter of urgency in compliance with Regulation 5(6)**

3. Where the date by which a meeting must be held makes compliance with the above requirements impracticable, the meeting may only be held in private where the decision-making body has obtained agreement from the Chairman of the Council.
4. Compliance with the requirements for the giving of public notice has been impracticable in relation to the business detailed below.
5. The Chairman of the Council has agreed that the Committee may hold a private meeting to consider the business referred to in paragraph 4 above because the meeting is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred for the reasons stated below.

<b>Date of Chairman's agreement</b>	<b>Matter in respect of which the decision is to be made</b>	<b>Reasons why meeting urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred</b>

For further information, please contact Quentin Baker on 01223 727961 or [Quentin.Baker@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Quentin.Baker@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)



**FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT**

*To:* **Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee**

*Meeting Date:* **13 December 2017**

*From:* **Fiona Mackirdy**  
**Head of Countywide and Looked After Children's services**

*Electoral division(s):* **All**

*Purpose:* **Fostering regulations require that an annual report of the fostering service should be presented to Elected Members**

*Recommendation:* **The Committee is asked to note the report**

<b><i>Officer contact:</i></b>	<b><i>Member contact:</i></b>
Name: <b>Fiona Mackirdy</b>	Names: Councillor Lis Every
Post: Head of Countywide and Looked After Children's Services	Role: Chairman, Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee
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Tel: 01223 715576	Tel: (office) 01223 706398

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Provision of fostering services is a key statutory requirement of the local authority and is essential to enabling children living away from home to receive good quality family care.
- 1.2 The provision of fostering services is governed by legislation and statutory guidance. Guidance requires that Elected members receive regular reports on the activity and quality of the fostering service.
- 1.3 A good in-house fostering service is essential to provide quality placements for children, and to enable management of placement costs. An in-house placement is usually about 50% of the cost of an externally commissioned placement in an Independent Fostering Agency.

## **2. MAIN ISSUES**

- 2.1 The Fostering Service Annual Report for 2016/17 is attached at Appendix 1. It is recommended that this is read in conjunction with the Annual Report of the Independent Fostering Panel Chair 2016/17 (Appendix 2) and the Fostering Statement of Purpose (to follow).
- 2.2 During 2016-17 there was increased activity in all areas of the fostering service. The service (at March 2017) had 125 households approved for fostering (growth of 15% from the previous year), providing 252 beds.
- 2.3 The Placement Sufficiency Strategy outlines the requirements for the in-house fostering service for the next two years. More in-house placements are needed with particular focus on older children and sibling groups. This will enable more children to be placed in-house and in-county and will contribute to management of the Looked After Children's Placement Budget.

## **3. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

### **3.1 Resource Implications**

The fostering service is delivered within the available budget. There are no significant implications from this report.

### **3.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications**

None

### **3.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications**

Consideration of this report meets the statutory requirements placed on the fostering service.

### **3.4 Equality and Diversity Implications**

None

**3.5 Engagement and Communications Implications**

None

**3.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement**

None

**3.7 Public Health Implications**

None

**SOURCE DOCUMENTS**

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2017 – 2020</b> <b>Item 8, Appendix 1</b>	<a href="https://cmis.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/ccclive/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/632/Committee/4/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx">https://cmis.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/ccclive/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/632/Committee/4/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx</a>



## **FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2016 - 2017**

### **1. Introduction**

This Annual report should be read in conjunction with the Fostering Statement of Purpose 2016-2017 and the Annual Report of the Fostering Panel Chair 2016-17.

The Statement of Purpose sets out the legislative and regulatory context under which Cambridgeshire County Council carries out the functions of the fostering service.

This report provides details of activity over the financial year April 2016 to March 2017 and plans for the forthcoming year.

### **2. Highlights**

- On 31 March 2017 there were 191 children and young people looked after in mainstream fostering beds compared to 151 on the 31 March 2016. This represents an increase of 26%.
- Recruitment of new fostering households continues to be positive. April 2016 to March 2017 saw 27 mainstream households approved at fostering panel (10 of which were transfers from IFAs) compared with 21 households last year. This represents an increase of 29%. The approvals created 49 beds compared with 40 beds last year
- There were 4 kinship regulation 27 approvals during 2016-17
- A high number of Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) fostering households have transferred into the Service, 10 households compared to 12 households in 2015/16. In 2015-2016 this provided 19 vacancies and in 2016-2017 this created 16 vacancies as well as bringing 9 Cambridgeshire children already in placement.
- As at 31 March 2017 there are a further 18 stage 2 assessments in progress and a further 15 enquirers have been invited to apply. This work will carry over into 2017/18.
- There has been continued demand for Kinship assessments with 141 new referrals between April 2016 and March 2017 compared to 99 in the previous year. This is an increase of 42%. There were 49 Special Guardianship Orders granted during this reporting period compared with 38 the previous year, an increase of 29%.
- During this year there were 26 new regulation 24 kinship fostering approvals made. Regulation 24 allows for temporary approval as foster carers of people connected to the child for 16 weeks pending a full fostering assessment.
- The high volume of applications for both mainstream fostering and kinship (connected persons) assessments has placed additional strain on the service. We started the year with 3 social work vacancies in the Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team, however all posts have now been filled.

### 3. Foster Panel

The Panel is chaired by an Independent Chair and meets fortnightly. The panel met on 25 occasions during 2016-2017. The Panel Chair's report acknowledges another year of steady progress in the quality of work presented by the fostering service (see attached report). Panel members joined the fostering service for a training event on Child Sexual Exploitation and radicalisation and have been given access to e-learning in order to complete Safeguarding refresher courses.

The Panel membership meets the requirements of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and there are currently 10 members on the central list.

The Policy and Practice Standards Manager who undertook the role of Agency Advisor to the panel was absent through sickness from October 2016. The Panel Advisor role has been undertaken by various managers and senior social workers in the service but sadly they have not had the capacity to quality assure panel papers prior to panel. This has resulted in the panel deferring two recommendations as important information had not been covered in the panel reports. The post holder has now left the council and the post will be advertised.

#### Summary of Panel Recommendations (April 2015 to March 2017)

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Number of panels	22	23	27	25
New Approvals	11	32	29	28
Resignations/Deregistration	26	14	15	22
Matches (numbers of children)	16	27	37	28
Change of approval	19	22	4	6
Reviews	35	46	40	39
Progression	13	16	16	14
Staying Put Approval	5	2	4	7
Best interest	0	0	25	13
Total number of actual cases presented	89	127	155	182

## 5. Marketing and Communication

In 2016/17 we received around 300 new fostering enquiries. There was a total of 28 new fostering households approved and 18 households in stage 1 and 2 of the process have been carried over into the new financial year.

The recruitment team developed a new approach to responding to new enquiries, with social workers covering the enquiry phone line on a rota basis. The opportunity for them to speak directly to potential carers and immediately book visits if appropriate has resulted in an increase in the number of initial visits being completed. A more consistent approach to following up enquiries has also been implemented.

2017/18 has seen a wide range of marketing and communications activities take place:

- In May 2016 our second annual New Carers Event took place. This was well attended and very positive feedback was received from carers and professionals. The follow-up press release achieved good coverage in local press and on social media.
- A campaign took place in May 2016 to tie in with national Foster Care Fortnight. Due to increased investment in marketing, radio advertising campaigns took place along with bus advertising and social media activities.
- Over the summer our Summer Roadshow continued to grow with staff attending an increased number of events across the county with our promotional stand. We particularly focused on events near the Peterborough border (Yaxley and Whittlesey).
- In widening our target area to include Peterborough we have also negotiated an advertising package for Peterborough's most-read newspaper and organised a promotional day and bill board advertising at Queensgate Shopping Centre.
- The annual Long Service Awards event took place in September at The Oliver Cromwell Hotel in March, with carers receiving awards from the Chairman of CCC in recognition of periods of long service from 5 to 25 years.
- The 2016/17 Christmas and New Year campaign included radio advertising, bus advertising and PR activities.
- In February we marked LGBT Adoption and Fostering Week with a range of PR activities which included an interview on Gaydio.
- An interview also took place on Huntingdon Community Radio to promote the Link Service and encourage potential Link carers to come forward. We have experimented with using case studies and anonymised profiles for children

looking for Link carers and placed ads with these messages in local press and on social media.

- 6 drop-in Information Sessions were held across the county
- The Marketing and Communications Manager continues to also provide support to teams across the service, working in areas such as Private Fostering. She has also managed projects to implement new initiatives, including the production of ID cards for foster carers.

## 6. Marketing objectives 2017/18

The Marketing and Communications objectives for 2017/18 include:

- Further development of Information Sessions to maximise their effectiveness and increase attendance levels
- Continue to increase the presence of the Cambridgeshire County Council Fostering Service brand in the Peterborough area
- Work in communities where we currently have a shortage of representation among our foster carers
- Encourage all colleagues from Children Families and Adults Directorate (CFA) teams and beyond to get involved in foster carer recruitment

## 7. Cambridgeshire Approved Households (as at 31 March 2017)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Total Number Approved Households	101	112	125
Total Number of Beds	197	219	252
Short breaks households	30	27	13
Short break beds	61	62	55
Kinship Foster Carers	23	34	
Kinship beds	30	56	

- 107 fostering households are approved children aged 5 years plus.
- 38 approved households fostering households offering 70 beds live in the Cambridge Area are approved
- 59 households offer 126 placements are based in the Fenland area 28 households offering 52 placements are based in the Huntingdon area.

Fostering households are often approved for one or two/three if siblings usually due to bedroom space available and in Cambridgeshire we only allow siblings (if appropriate) to share bedrooms. Where the carers are not used to their full approval, this is usually due to a single child having been placed thus restricting the use of the shared bed. On 31 March 2017 a total of 6 beds were vacant and a further 5 were available for respite and short term emergencies only.

## **8. Mainstream Fostering Occupancy rates**

On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 there were 191 children placed with in house foster carers this is a increase in occupancy compared to 151 in mainstream fostering beds in use on 31 March 2016.

In addition further 31 children were placed with regulation 27 kinship foster carers and a further 13 in regulation 24 kinship placements

On 31 March 2017:

57 children were in long term/permanent beds this is an increase 14 over the last financial year.

There were 134 children were in short term/emergency foster care compare with 108 the previous year.

## **9. Fostering Reviews**

The foster carer's annual review of approval addresses all relevant aspects of the National Minimum Fostering Standards and Regulations 2001. The reviews are written by the supervising fostering social worker and either presented to panel and endorsed by the agency decision maker or submitted to the agency decision maker for consideration. All the completed reviews are scrutinised by the team manager who monitors compliance with the regulations before final sign off.

There is currently a review of the forms and format of reviews which will involve consultation with foster carers, fostering social workers and foster panel. Current format includes formal Personal Development Plans and feedback from children, their social workers and other professionals working with the fostering household. The Service is giving consideration to using the new format which has been developed by BAAF and this is currently being trailed with a small number of fostering households.

100 reviews were carried out in this reporting period, 38 reviews of foster households were presented to the Foster Panel and 5 changes of approval terms were presented and 15 requests for progression were heard by panel. All first reviews

were presented to Foster Panel within a year of the carer's approval as required by the regulations.

A particular recurring theme for fostering social workers is the challenge of obtaining feedback on carers from children's social workers. It is a requirement in the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 that this feedback is provided for a foster carer's annual review, fostering social workers continue to find it difficult to get responses to requests from feedback from children's social worker units for the foster carer reviews.

The Fostering Panel also felt that the Personal & Professional Development Plan (PPDP) appears to be underused and not necessarily fulfilling its purpose as well as it could be and would benefit from a renewed focus. It would be beneficial for annual reviews to reflect on the previous years' PPDP and to identify gaps in order to prioritise this learning for the following year. The service is planning to utilise the role of the fostering trainer to support a more focussed approach to foster carer PPDP's.

## 10. Outcome of OFSTED inspection of the Fostering Service

The Fostering Service was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2012. The outcome of this inspection was judged as GOOD all recommendations have been acted upon.

This year the fostering service was inspected as part of the wider social care inspection and contributed to the overall judgement as "Good".

## 11. Short Breaks Care

### NUMBER OF CARERS AND SKILLS LEVELS

April of YEAR	Basic	Extra	Plus	Retained	TOTAL households
2013	10	8	10	6(140 placements)	34
2014	11	8	9	6 (40 placements)	34
2015				5 (40 placements)	27
2016	11	8	8	6	27
2017	1	2	6	4 (22 placements)	15

There are 15 carer households approved specifically for short break care and currently provides placements to 55 children with disabilities. There are 4 retained foster carers providing short breaks to 22 children and young people. 2 foster carers can offer short break care in addition to short or long term foster care.

Referrals for short breaks were received in 2016-17, This compares with previous years as below.

2010-11 - 20 referrals

2011-12 – 18 referrals

2012-13 – 19 referrals

2013-14 – 18 referrals

2014-15 – 18 Referrals

2015-16 17 Referrals

2016-17 30 Referrals

### **Short break summary**

This has been a challenging year for the Link Unit, following the Fostering Service restructure last year the unit was carrying 1.5 social work vacancies and a half time senior child and family worker vacancy. This left a 25 hour Child Social Workers (CSW) and 32 hour Senior Social Worker covering the Service. Unfortunately the CSW went on long term sick leave. The Senior Social Worker step in to cover, we informed Carers, Service Users and the Disability Service that we were prioritising carer supervisions and reviews; in order to meet Regulations and National Minimum Standards and ensure that current placements were safe and meeting children's needs.

The matching process for children and short break carers is carried out at monthly meetings and the Link Team Manager now attends the Disabled Children's Managers meetings. Short break carers also offer day care placements to support families who have a child with a disability and care has also been provided by carers in the child's own home. The overall aim is to improve the range of support and flexibility of the service. This Service received 30 referrals this financial year and despite the challenges were able to match and introduce 13 children and young people with Link carers.

In addition to short break care there are a number of established 'shared care' arrangements for children with a disability. This is where the child spends two or more nights per week with a foster carer and the remaining time at home with parents. These arrangements allow the child to remain part of their birth family and avoid the need for full time care. I am pleased to report that by March 2017 the Unit had recruited and inducted four new staff members and the CSW is returning from sick leave in April 2017. The Unit is now fully staffed

### **13 Fostering Support Groups**

The Service has continued to see a decline in the number of carers attending Fostering Support Groups despite the Services response to carers requests for additional support groups to be organised in across all three main geographical area. Interestingly however there has been an increase in numbers of carers attending a support group run in the Ely area by one of the foster carers. The service is providing

funding for the venue and the carers seem to enjoy the more informal nature of the group.

The purpose of the service led support group is to provide support for each other, maintain contact with the service and wider children's social care through the attendance of visiting speakers, such as Virtual School, Lac health, IRO's and Children's participation to name a few. Further work is required with foster carers to see how they would like future groups to be run.

2015/16 saw the launch of a Men who Foster support group, there have been a number of additional meetings this year and although attendance has remained small the group continues to evolve and we have seen some new participants attending the group. Recruiting social workers will continue to actively engage new male carers with the group.

Foster carers are represented at recruitment events and information sessions and give a talk to prospective foster carers at the skills to foster training. Two fostering households gave a talk at a specialist recruitment event set up by the Cambridge refugee resettlement group. The carers have developed particular skills in careering for a number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people over a number of years. The event was very well attended and feedback was very positive with people commenting on how inspiring they had found the carers to be and how they brought the joys and complexities of caring for this vulnerable group of young people to life.

The fostering service continues to provide an effective out of hour's advice and support service for foster carers. Carers have access to an out hours duty fostering social worker 7 days per week, Fostering Service Manager and Team Managers also provide additional 24/7 cover on a rota basis.

#### **14. Kinship/Connected Person assessments**

The Kinship assessment team has worked with 189 families within the year 2016/2017. This represents an increase in Kinship Team involvements of 81.73% This year has also seen an increase of 42.42% in the number of Special Guardianship assessments referred to the service (up from 99 in 2015/2016 to 141 this financial year) and recent months have seen a real increase in activity which has led significantly increased pressure upon the assessment team.

#### **Referrals**

Number Referrals	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Number referrals	65	99	141
Special Guardianship Orders (SGO's) Made	34	38	49

Child Arrangement Orders (CAO's)made	-	-	7
New fully regulated carers			9

### **Reported outcomes**

The cases that have had active involvement between the April 2016- April 2017 have the following reported outcomes:

<b>Positive Recommendation</b>	<b>Negative Recommendation</b>	<b>Withdrawn from the assessment</b>
2015/16 -29	2015/6 -10	2015/16 -32
2016/17 -66	2016/17 -27	2016/17 42
2015/16 Total= 104		
2016/17 Total 141		

### **Special Guardianship Orders made in the year 2016-2017:**

49 children became subject to Special Guardianship Orders between the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2016 and the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2017. An increase of 53.12% from last year when 32 children were made subject of SGO's.

### **Use of additional workers**

Despite being fully staffed for the majority of the year the increase in referrals and work being undertaken by the Kinship Assessment Team has meant that some work has been undertaken outside normal staffing arrangements the table below show how this work has been allocated.,

<b>Method of assessment:</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>
Independent Social Workers	13	12
Relief staff	6	2

Agency Workers	5	6
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### Increase in Regulation 24 requests

A brief analysis appears to evidence that six Regulation 24 placements were agreed in the year 2014- 2015. Within the year 2015-2016 it rose to 22 households an increase of 266.6% and in 2016/17 26 reg 24 placements were made.

### Step Parent Adoption applications

A function of the Kinship assessment team is to undertake Step Parent Adoption assessments.

The step parent adoption service now has a dedicated worker to undertake assessments and develop the service. This will see a more timely response to court requests for reports and better service to clients.

### Statistical Information

<b>Title</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Enquiries made to Cambridgeshire County Council	46
Assessments completed	20
Orders made	15
Assessments awaiting allocation	16

### Kinship team Aims:

The Kinship assessment team's aims for 2016-2017 were as follows:

<b>Aim</b>	<b>Result</b>
Undertake case Audits	Case Audits have been completed and lessons shared with the team in team meetings
Seek feedback from service users to ensure they feel equipped to meet the needs of the children they are caring for	Feedback is requested on a quarterly basis and service user feedback is saved in the kinship folder
Develop a Kinship carers handbook	The first draft of this is completed
The introduction of Placement Planning meetings	This has been successfully introduced and is now consistent

Seeking the views of Independent Reviewing Officers for Reg25 extensions	This occurs the majority of the time, however there is room for improvement
New Reg24 carers being visited within the first week of placement	This remains inconsistent due to late referral's and client and worker availability.
Ensuring that Regulation 24 carers have 6 weekly supervision	This is both tracked and ensured.

Aims for this year are as follows:

<b>Aim</b>
Attain feedback from the unit as well as clients
Introduce Special Guardianship Audits
Introduce new Special Guardianship Support Plan
All Regulation 24 cases are visited within 7 days post decision being made
More contact planning meetings
Reports to be reduced to fifteen to eighteen thousand words

## 15. Private Fostering 2016/17

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to monitor the work with private fostering cases. Private Fostering arrangements are made between those with parental responsibility and another individual to take care of their child for a period of longer than 28 days. This arrangement should be reported to the Local Authority for assessment and monitoring. The Local Authority has had a dedicated senior social worker for the task working part time alongside a dedicated newly qualified social worker. This function now sits in the Kinship Support and Private Fostering Unit which is a new Unit within the Fostering Service, the Unit was established in October 2015 following a wider Fostering Service consultation. There is a Private Fostering Annual report due to be presented to the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) in July 2017.

## PRIVATE FOSTERING ACTIVITY IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

This year saw a significant decrease in the number of Private Fostering notifications with number dropping by 54.20% from 107 notifications to 55, this significant drop appears to be as a result of a number of Language School shortening the duration of their courses to under 27 days which means that the host families no longer need to be

assessed under Private Fostering regulation. This raises safeguarding concerns as host families will no longer require assessment yet the children still remain vulnerable as they are not in their home land and often speak very little English.

## **16. Complaints and Allegations**

There were 6 allegations concerning foster carers during this reporting, this is the same figure as last year. All allegations were discussed with the LADO, 5 were followed up as by the fostering service and children's social workers as single agency enquiries. In 2 of the cases the police did speak with the alleged perpetrators but no action was taken.

In 2 cases the allegations related to the carers work and not their fostering setting and 1 case there was no formal allegation but the police discussed the historical issue with the carer. None of the allegations were substantiated

There were 3 formal complaints this financial year, 1 was related to a kinship reference with the referee being concerned that issues she had raised were referred to in a court report. However in investigating the complaint we were satisfied that referee could not be identified by the information contained in the report, they had not been promised confidentiality and as a professional working with children the information was needed for the court.

The other complaints were not specifically about the service but were part of wider complaints about children's social care

## **17. Training**

In the financial year April 2016 to March 2017 there were 71 scheduled training courses, of these 61 ran, 7 were cancelled and 3 were postponed. There were 629 overall attendees.

**Skills to Foster Course** This is a preparation course which is undertaken prior to approval by all fostering applicants and runs across 6 days

- In May 2017 training dates ran with 3 households, 2 for fostering and 1 for Supported Lodgings. A 1 day experienced carers course for IFA carers transferring to CCC ran with 4 households at the same time, all were at Alconbury Memorial Hall.
- July ran with 5 households, a large number of participants were invited but did not commit to attending the course
- In August the Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Team and Fostering Support Team ran a Children Who Foster Skills to Foster session with 7 children from 4 households to look at how fostering would affect them.
- September Skills to Foster ran with 9 households and was run by the FRAT team, I assisted in preparation and planning, however, did not deliver the course.

- We booked November Skills to Foster, however, it was moved to January 2017 due to changes in staffing of the FRAT team and new members starting it was felt it was better to move it to a later date. A one day course for experienced carers transferring still ran in November with 4 households. The January course had 5 households.
- March Skills ran with 4 households booked on, although more households were invited many couldn't attend the dates invited to.
- A total of 34 households who attended Skills across the year.

A number of courses came back into fostering from Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption after some negative feedback on how the courses were presented; these are now run by the Fostering Trainer. 9 new courses were also added across the training year, including PREVENT awareness training and some others were delivered by the specialist clinicians team.

Feedback for fostering run courses and clinician run courses continues to be positive. On some clinical courses carers have asked for case studies so this will be added into the courses going forward. In the phase one consultation of the Children's Change Programme it was considered that the clinical input into the fostering training programme was withdrawn. Feedback about the benefits of specialist clinicians delivering some of the courses to foster carers was provided to through the consultation and we were pleased with the decision to maintain clinical input to the fostering service until Oct 2017.

We have used ME learning as our e-learning provider the last year, 23 modules were allocated in the first 6 months of the year where we directly purchased the modules from ME learning on a one by one basis, after 6 months we bought an access licence from them for 15 modules and use is below, with 199 being accessed:

- Autism awareness – 20
- Bullying and cyberbullying – 23
- Cultural awareness in safeguarding – 9
- Domestic abuse – 16
- Effective communication with children – 11
- Emotional abuse – 23
- Equality and diversity – 8
- E-safety – 18
- Human need – 10
- Neglect 14
- Physical abuse – 11
- Safeguarding – 6
- Understanding behaviour – 16
- Child Sexual Exploitation – 14

Currently the costings for ME learning are high, £4000 for a continued provision for the next year, though compared to buying individual units over the same period this is a cost saving. Management decision is needed on how to proceed.

The training brochure is going out in April this year, a flyer has been circulated with April and May courses already. The brochure was delayed due to several factors, one being the decision on clinical input; we were also advised that Training Manager, the booking system, was no longer continuing after March 2017. This has now been extended until July 2017 and will run on a month by month basis until a suitable replacement has been found. A further delay was that due to restructuring in Workforce Development and them becoming part of LGSS the person that delivered the disability training left the service so the future of a large proportion of the courses co-run for CSS and Link and carers of children with a disability were not planned. For the second year we have produced the brochure within the fostering team, rather than use a designer, at a significant cost saving.

From links the Fostering Group Manager made previously with the Cambridge Refugee Council we made contacts with Save the Children who delivered a two-day training course for us in July 2016 on caring for unaccompanied asylum seeking children. ECPAT UK and the Refugee Council also delivered a training course on asylum seeking and separated children for us in February 2017 where on both we had a mix of carers already carers for USAC and others who are interested in doing this in the future.

## **18. Budget**

The service came in under budget as predicted

## **19. Summary**

This has been a busy and year for the Fostering Service. There has been an increase in the number of children requiring foster care and a significant increase in the number of children needing long term placements. The team has continued to work hard to try to keep young people in local Cambridgeshire, in-house placements thereby enabling them to maintain links with their families and communities.

The overall level of the work across the Service has continued to increased significantly and has brought with it the challenge of meeting the individual demands of the various timescales across different parts of the service, in addition to the increase of work the service was also carried a number of vacancies throughout the year and has been inducting new staff.

In addition to recruiting and supporting foster carers, the service is responsible for undertaking connected person's assessments (kinship), providing a short break fostering service and carries out private fostering assessments and Step-parent adoptions. The service works closely with CFA Access to resources and provides a Duty Service each day to identify any urgent and emergency placement required

across Children's Social Care. In addition to the dedicated fostering trainer, social workers in the service also provide regular training for foster carers both pre-approval and post approval. In order to meet the needs of the foster carer training and undertake marketing activity workers across the service often work during the evenings and weekends. The service runs a successful Foster Carer mentoring scheme and monthly support groups in three geographical areas.

The successful recruitment has brought new challenges to the service; the majority of new recruits this year are new to fostering and have required high levels of support during their placements and throughout their first year of fostering. That being said 11 of the 28 new households transferred in from IFA's bringing Cambridgeshire children with them. This has resulted in significant saving from the placement budget spend.

Other challenges included the transfer of long term Family Finding from the Adoption Team and the development of a Family Finding Unit in October 2015, the Unit is staffed by a full time CSW and 1.5 Social Workers the unit are working with 109 open long term family finding cases.

The service has risen to the challenges of implementing the new model however the recruitment of 81 new fostering household over a three year period has impacted on the capacity of the Fostering Support Team and the Fostering Recruitment Team to meet the demand and recent feedback from carers indicated that they were feeling the impact in respect of their supervising social workers capacity to support them. This is being addressed through an action plan that has been developed following work with a Placement Consultant

The Kinship Assessment Team saw another dramatic increase in demand for Kinship Assessments. The unit ended the financial year fully staffed however the increasing numbers of kinship referrals mean that the team are always working to full capacity. The Team have worked hard to implement a new policies and procedures and to improve practice through development of forms and templates and more robust assessment formats that meet new standards and regulations related to Kinship work.

The Service has seen a number of Senior Management Changes, The Head of Lac left in August 2016 and there were a number of interim Heads of Service until the recent appointment of a substantial Head of County wide Services and Lac. There have been 2 new Agency Decision Makers and the Fostering Group Manager will be retiring in May 2017 the post has yet to be recruited to.

## **20. Developments for 2017/18**

Following on from the CFA transformation consultations; the Service will be involved in a number of innovative programmes over the coming Year. The authority is

adopting a No Wrong Door approach to residential Service entitled The Place and this will also involve development of foster carers to link with The Place.

**Target: 40 New Fostering and 10 Supportive Lodging Settings**, we have recruited a Senior Social Worker on a fixed term basis to lead on the Supported Lodging Project.

***Recruitment of new carers:***

- Increase marketing, web presence and carer participation in recruitment activity.
- Bolster the fostering recruitment and assessment team to enable them respond quicker to enquiries
- Improved fee entry level to encourage new carers who are looking for a substitute income.

**Target: 60 NEW CARERS RECRUITED BY APRIL 2019**

**Support** for all of our carers when they need it most

- The creation of a 'wrap around service' to include further therapeutic input and an improved 'out of hours' provision. This project will be known as the Hub and is based on the "Mocking Bird Model.

The next financial year will bring new challenges and exciting developments as we develop the service further to ensure that we have the right resources in the right place.

The assessment team, fostering support team, family finding team and access to resources team will need to continue to work closely together to ensure that gaps in provision are identified and that we are recruiting the right carers for the right children at the right time.

The Kinship Team and they will be working closely with colleagues in the units to provide clearer understanding of kinship regulations and support their development in carrying out more robust viability assessments and taking into consideration the number of Kinship applications that are withdrawn following the Kinship Teams involvement we will need to explore more closely what could have been done differently in the earlier viability stage to ensure that applicants were more informed as to both the role they are considering taking on but also the implications for the long term.

We will need to continue to monitor referrals levels to ensure that we have sufficient resources to meet the level of demand for assessments and ensure that they are completed within timescales set by the court.

The Kinship Support and Private Fostering Unit is still relatively new and there is much to be developed, the Unit will be undertaking Adoption Allowance reviews having successfully reviewed 140 SGO/CAO during 2016/17. Other areas for development include;

- Kinship foster carer support groups
- Work with Fostering Service trainer to improve training offer to Kinship foster carers which takes into account their specific needs
- Close links with Kinship Assessment Team to ensure a seamless transition from assessment to support and to ensure that SGO support plans are robust.

In respect of private fostering we will be raising awareness of private fostering by:

- providing training on private fostering for professionals within the council including through corporate induction events as well as through the Local Safeguarding Children's Board training program
- providing clear information and guidance about private fostering on the council's website including links to other organisations that can provide help and support
- distributing newly developed information leaflets and production of information leaflets and posters in alternative languages for key groups, and ensuring they are available on the council's website and in the places parents, carers and children and young people are likely to go, including:
  - schools, nurseries and children's centres
  - council offices and libraries
  - GP surgeries and health centres and hospitals
  - including features on private fostering in the parish council magazine and district council booklets which have high distribution rates across the county, and also providing features to the local press
  - closer liaison with local faith groups, churches and places of worship, voluntary and community organisations
  - Encouraging partner agencies who are members of Local Safeguarding Children Board to raise awareness and provide training to their staff.

The Link service will continue to build on the development of a skilled and professional range of short breaks carers who are able to meet the needs of children

with complex needs. They will continue to work closely with colleagues in disabled children's services and health and will consult with children and their families as well as the carers to ensure that we provide safe and responsive short breaks to meet the needs of the children and young people referred.

Jill Blose

Fostering Group Manager

**Cambridgeshire County Council  
Fostering Panel**

**Annual report of the Independent Panel Chair  
1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017**

## **1.0 Introduction**

This report covers the work undertaken by the Cambridgeshire County Council Fostering Panel from April 2016 to March 2017. During that period 27 Panels were scheduled and 25 took place. Of the 2 not held, 1 was an additional Panel that was no longer required, and the second was cancelled due to being inquorate.

## **2.0 Functioning of the Fostering Panel**

### **Panel membership**

Under the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, a Fostering Panel should have; in addition to a Chair or Vice Chair and a qualified social worker with 3 years' relevant post qualifying experience; 3 other members who 'between them (have) the experience and expertise necessary, to effectively discharge the functions of the panel'. (Reg. 23 (7)). Therefore 5 Panel members must be present for the meeting to go ahead. Given the increase in the number of cases coming to Panel it has been reassuring to now have sufficient members to draw up an attendance rota, thus sharing the workload.

Towards the latter part of last year, a campaign was launched on the Council website to recruit candidates from the Local Authority and general public, with the criteria for membership of the Panel being a connection to, or understanding of, issues relating to fostering, adoption or looked after children. There was a good response and, at this point in time, a varied and experienced range of personnel have been appointed to the central list. This includes those with personal experience of being fostered, a Councillor who is on the Corporate Parenting Committee, a foster carer approved by a fostering provider other than Cambridgeshire, and an adopter and birth parent, among others.

However, there continues to be a regular turnover of members due to changes in staffing within the Local Authority and the work and family commitments of independent members. For those with an interest in joining the central list an informal discussion with the Panel Advisor or Administrators is always welcomed, as it is vital to ensure the availability of sufficient members with a wide range of knowledge, skills and experience to attend the twice monthly meetings.

All Panel members are interviewed prior to appointment, DBS checks are carried out and references are requested in writing and followed up by direct contact. Members are required to sign a protocol which outlines the Local Authority's expectations, and gives Panel members details of the induction, supervision and support available. Applicants must be able to commit to attending a minimum of 8 meetings a year as well as 2 training sessions. All those sitting on the Panel must sign a confidentiality agreement and are given a Panel Handbook, which covers relevant legislation, guidance and policies. If all the requirements for membership

are met, an applicant's name is placed on the 'central list' from which attendance at Panel is drawn.

It is important to recognise the dedication of existing Panel members, who come well prepared having carefully studied the often lengthy reports in preparation for each meeting. The Panel works well as a team but members are supported to constructively challenge when necessary, as this ensures the objectivity and openness so essential to an effective Panel.

### **Functions of the Panel**

The role of the Fostering Panel is to consider the new approval, continued approval, variation of approval terms, and termination of approval of applicants and foster carers who care for children and young people up to the age of 18. The Panel also specifies, guided by the assessing or fostering social worker, the most appropriate approval terms which may include the number, age, gender and placement type, for example time limited or respite, for each approved carer.

Under the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 the Panel considers the first annual review of each fostering household. Reviews are then brought back to Panel every 5 years to ensure that support, development and training needs are being met and that the approval terms remain appropriate. All other annual reviews are carried out by a carer's fostering social worker and signed off by the Decision Maker. Panel are notified of any complaints, allegations of abuse or standard of care concerns.

Approvals include those of family and friend's carers, also known as connected persons, who have been granted temporary approval under Reg. 24 Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 for named children only. In some cases, it has not been possible to carry out the necessary reports and checks within the temporary approval timescale of 16 weeks. The Panel's view should be sought before a one-off extension of 8 weeks, under Reg. 25 (CPPCR 2010) is granted. The decision as to whether the extension is agreed is made by the Decision Maker.

The Panel has a quality assurance role, giving feedback to the Fostering Service on the standard of annual fostering household reviews (AFHR) and assessments, aiming always to achieve best practice. Any issues relating to the quality of work presented by social work teams, other than the Fostering Service, are fed back through the Panel Adviser to the social worker and/or team manager.

With the advent of the Staying Put scheme there will be young people up to the age of 21 (or 24 if continuing in full time education) who will remain living with their long-term foster carers. However, young people over the age of 18 are no longer looked after and Staying Put is an agreement between the carer and the young person who contributes financially if they are in paid employment.

## **Areas for further discussion:**

- There needs to be continued recruitment of independent Panel members from a diverse range of backgrounds, with relevant personal and professional experience to ensure a balanced membership that reflects the local community.
- Encouragement to staff working for the Council to apply for membership of the central list. Panel membership is an opportunity for career development, broadening experience and skills.

## **Support to Panel**

The Panel is very efficiently organised by Tessa Bruce and Lauren Watson. Their attention to detail gives member's confidence in the Panel process, and members are grateful for their commitment. Papers are circulated 5 working days prior to each Panel; an administrator takes the minutes of each meeting and these are circulated to everyone who attended within a further 5 days.

The role of the Panel Adviser, which is not a statutory requirement, was undertaken by the Policy and Practice Standards Manager up until the end of last year. There has subsequently been a range of staff, including senior managers and social workers who have stepped into the role and ably guided members with their knowledge of Cambridgeshire's policies and procedures. The permanent post of Panel Advisor will be advertised shortly, and the role will now be overseen outside of the Fostering Service, within the quality assurance team.

The Panel has, on many occasions, welcomed Jill Blose as Panel Adviser and I'm sure I speak for all members in thanking her for many years of support and guidance, which has been much appreciated. We wish her well following her retirement from Cambridgeshire.

Over the last year, members have become more aware of the duplication of information in reports and Panel are looking to work with the Fostering Service to streamline and reduce the volume of paperwork submitted. The Panel requires in depth information to make an informed recommendation, but equally does not need to physically see all the forms relating to a case if they can be easily summarised within the main body of the report. Working with the Fostering Service, Panel would like to review and revise the format of a wide range of reports so that we can jointly establish a benchmark for the work presented to Panel; with key information analysed and the focus on providing supporting 'evidence' to demonstrate the skills of applicants and carers to improve outcomes for children and young people.

The Panel can request support from a Medical Officer and Legal Adviser, but this is rarely necessary as any queries have traditionally been requested and fed back through the Panel Adviser. In addition, given the breadth of knowledge held within the Panel by members who have professional expertise, essential

information is often readily available. However, as part of an annual Panel Business Meeting it would be helpful to meet with the Medical Officer and Legal Adviser to discuss their role and the support available to Panel.

### **Areas for further discussion**

- There is a need to establish consistency in the documents submitted to Panel for each type of presentation.
- Further work and consultation between the Fostering Service and Panel on the analysis and use of supporting evidence (e.g. examples of practice) in reports.
- An invitation to the Medical Officer and Legal Adviser to meet with the Panel.

### **Panel roles and tasks**

The work of the Panel during the last year is outlined in the attached table and chart, with annual fostering household reviews constituting the bulk of the work. Panel members have continued to express an interest in having feedback on the outcome of long term fostering matches. Sadly, not all of these are successful, and Panel members feel there would be considerable benefit from liaison with the manager responsible for convening disruption meetings. This is seen by the Panel as a valuable opportunity for learning.

Panel makes a recommendation to the Decision Maker, Richard Holland who makes 'a considered decision ... within seven working days of receipt of the final set of minutes'. Applicants and foster carers are 'informed orally of the decision maker's decision within two working days and written confirmation is sent to them within five working days.' (National Minimum Standards for Foster Care 2011, Standard 14.9 & 14.10).

The Decision Maker can request additional information, that may not have been available to the Panel, to assist in making a final decision. Over the course of the last year the recommendations of the Panel, and the decisions of the Decision Maker, have mostly agreed. An important contribution to decision making is the final copy of minutes. These are initially reviewed by the Chair and Advisor before being forwarded to those members who attended the relevant meeting. The level of scrutiny is robust and ensures that the Panel's recommendations are well evidenced and provide an accurate record, not only for the Local Authority, but also for those attending Panel as prospective or approved foster carers.

### **Areas for further discussion**

- Arranging training for members on achieving positive outcomes for children and young people in long term fostering placements, informed by reports from disruption meetings following placement breakdowns.

## **Appraisals**

The appraisal of Panel members takes place annually. The Chair and Advisor have been carrying out appraisals after each Panel meeting and the subsequent reports detail the member's contribution to Panel, objectives for the following year, feedback on the effectiveness of the Panel and any areas for development and training, for either the individual or Panel. A copy is given to the member and another is placed on their Panel personnel file.

## **Panel training and business meetings**

By signing the protocol members agree to attend training. This is an essential component of the Quality Assurance role of Panel. There is an expectation that members keep up to date with any developments or research relevant to Panel business and, in addition, the Chair regularly feeds back any changes within national legislation, guidance and practice.

In February 2017 Panel members attended training on 'Mentalization', having heard many foster carers speak highly of the benefits of adopting a model that helped them have a better understanding of the possible reasons behind young people's behaviour. The training outlined the need to be more attentive to a child's mental state, both physically and psychologically, and provided an insight into the importance of a carer's day to day interaction with any child placed with them.

Informal training took place under Any Other Business, with a valuable discussion on 2 Serious Case Reviews (originating from the Safeguarding Children Board of London Borough of Hackney and City and SCB Croydon). Both cases had findings which were highly relevant to the functioning of Fostering Panels. It is hoped to engage with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for further discussion on how best the Panel can incorporate the recommendations of these reviews.

Training on Safeguarding was also made available to members, either online or by attending courses listed in the Foster Carer's Training Programme. There has also been discussion on holding a Panel Business Meeting annually to, for example, address the issues raised in the annual report as well as the general functioning of the Panel. The first of these was held in April 2017.

### **Areas for further discussion:**

- Use of 'Any Other Business' to discuss any practice issues raised and identify any training needs for the Panel.
- Set dates for training and Business Meetings for the next year.

## **3.0 The Panel meeting**

### **Carers attendance at Panel**

Prospective and approved foster carers are actively encouraged to attend every Panel that is discussing issues relating to them. Carers and applicants are

invited to be present in the meeting, other than when third party information or the recommendation, and reasons for it, are being discussed. Panel members are very aware that attendance at Panel can be quite overwhelming and every effort is made to welcome and support carers. A booklet which gives details of each Panel member's background will also be made available in the waiting room. This is now being completed and will include information on newly appointed members.

The aim of the Panel is to be open, transparent and fair. At times the Panel will need to address areas of concern with a foster carer, and any such discussion will be carried out sensitively, recognising the carer's strengths and the complexity of the fostering task. However, throughout all the Panel's work, members will maintain their focus on promoting the best interests and outcomes of the children and young people we look after.

Over the last year, Panel have highlighted that annual household reviews tend to concentrate on the main carer, who is more frequently than not, female. Contributions from, or discussion about male carer's role is often absent or limited. Although male carers may have work commitments that prohibit them attending Panel, members would like to see them more fully represented within reports, in acknowledgement of the important role they play within the fostering household.

### **Attendance by Social Workers**

In addition to the presenting social worker, Panel would encourage a young person's social worker to attend for matters such as matching for a long term fostering placement, as they have a great deal to contribute to the discussion given their close relationship with the child.

Panel have warmly welcomed young person to contribute directly to Panel when appropriate, for example, when considering their long-term match or agreeing a Staying Put arrangement. The Panel has received written representation from young people and, on many occasions, impressive multimedia presentations incorporating graphics and music.

### **Observers**

There are frequent requests to observe Panel, but there is a restriction of 1 observer at each meeting, although invitations may relate to either a morning or afternoon session to increase the 'slots' available. Observers come from a range of backgrounds, which include student social workers, new members of staff attending as part of their induction, prospective Panel members or senior management. Observers must sign a confidentiality form and are made aware, by the Chair, that they cannot contribute to Panel and must declare any conflict of interest. At the end of the meeting observers are encouraged to ask questions and give feedback on the Panels effectiveness.

## **Panel feedback**

Panel members' complete forms to give feedback to presenting staff, and forms are also available for feedback from workers and foster carers to the Panel. Comments relating to the experience of attending Panel are very positive. Those that raise concerns are followed through by the Panel Advisor and Chair. The feedback forms are due to be revised to broaden the scope of the information requested. Feedback forms are sent out with invitation letters and are also available in the waiting room.

## **Areas for further discussion**

- Review of the circulation and format of feedback forms.
- Encouragement of children's social workers to contribute to annual fostering household reviews.
- Face to face interviews by fostering social workers with looked after children and carer's own children to increase the feedback for annual fostering household reviews and matching for long term placements.
- Agreeing a set process for the Panel Adviser to give feedback on practice issues to social workers and/or their line managers and subsequently inform Panel of the outcome of such feedback.

## **4.0 Quality Assurance**

Reports of a high standard are recognised, the author thanked and any additional comments from members are recorded in the minutes. The majority of reports presented to Panel are of a good standard, giving all the information necessary to make an informed decision.

Issues relating to reports that do not contain sufficient information are recorded in the Panel feedback form and are discussed with the presenting social worker and their manager by the Adviser.

Members would welcome involvement when changes to policies, procedures and practice are being considered within the Fostering Service as this relates to the Panel's Quality Assurance role.

## **5.0 Objectives for April 2017 to March 2018**

- Continued recruitment of Panel members who reflect the wider community or can provide specific knowledge or experience relevant to looked after children. For example, in the area of education, health, promoting independence or unaccompanied asylum seekers.
- Consideration as to how the information is presented for cases for matching to ensure that the report is objective and would be beneficial to a young person who wishes to access their file at a later date.
- To arrange joint training and Business Meetings for the Panel and Fostering Service.
- To promote and highlight the valued role of male foster carers in fostering household reviews and support their engagement with training.

## **6.0 Summary**

Reflecting on the changes within the organisation and membership of Panel, it has been a year of some uncertainty, but regardless of this the Panel has continued to focus on their role and work to a consistently high standard.

The Panel would like to acknowledge the contribution made by all those working with, and caring for our children and young people. Most importantly, the Panel would like to thank foster carers and their families who play such a vital part in children's lives, giving them the opportunity to experience family life and to know they are valued and loved.

*Sara E.J. Neville*

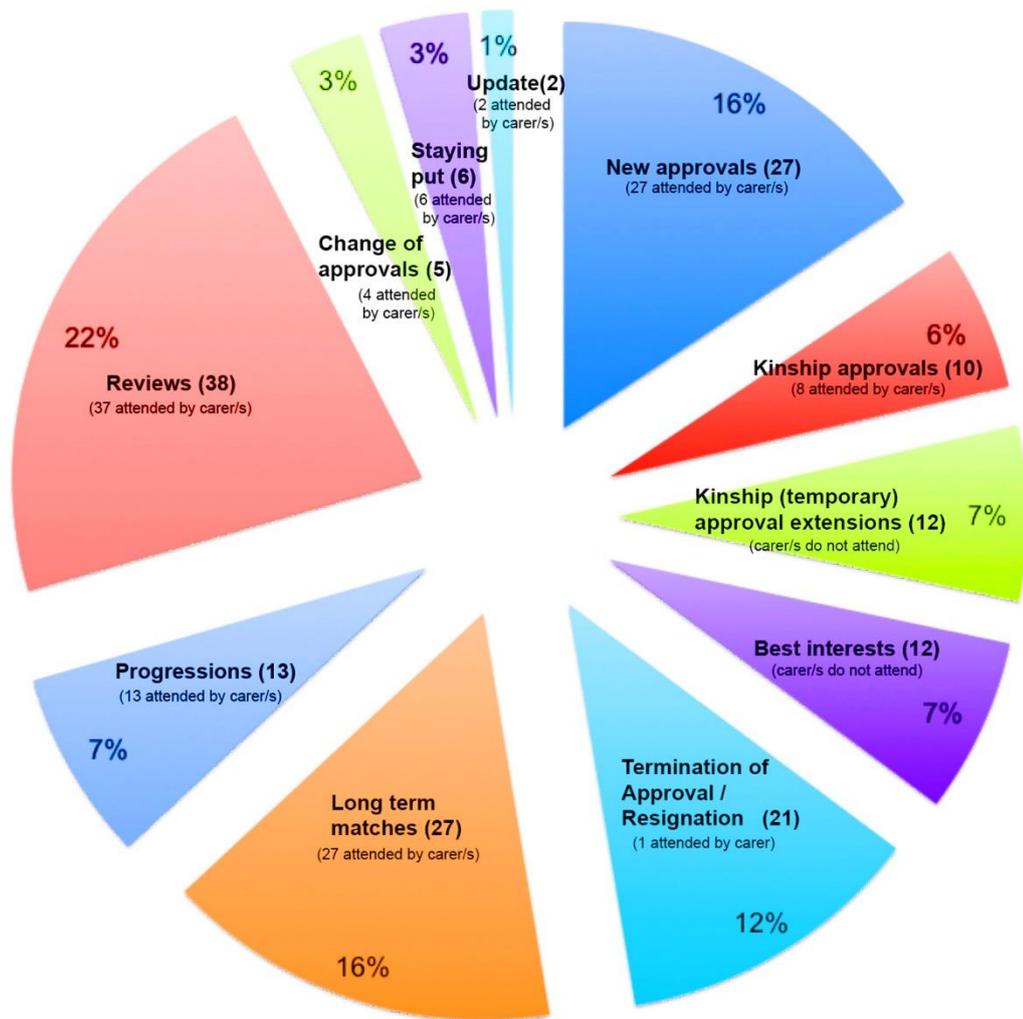
Independent Fostering Panel Chair

1<sup>st</sup> May 2017

Fostering Panel Statistics - Number of Panels  
(table): April 2016 - March 2017

		No. of panels scheduled	No. of panels taken place	Reason for cancellation
2016	April	2	2	
	May	2	2	
	June	3	3	
	July	2	1	not enough panel members to be quorate
	August	3	3	
	September	2	2	
	October	3	2	extra panel was cancelled as no longer needed
	November	3	3	
	December	1	1	
2017	January	2	2	
	February	2	2	
	March	2	2	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>25</b>	

Fostering Panel Statistics (pie chart): April 2016 - March 2017





**VIRTUAL SCHOOL REPORT**

**To:** Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

**Meeting Date:** December 2017

**From:** Jo Pallett  
Learning Directorate Lead for Vulnerable Groups  
Head of the Virtual School

**Electoral division(s):** All

**Purpose:** To outline the role of the Virtual School and to inform the Committee of Cambridgeshire’s Looked After Children outcomes.

**Recommendation:** The Committee is asked to note and comment on the report.

<b>Officer contact:</b>		<b>Member contact:</b>	
Name:	Joanna Pallett	Names:	Councillor Lis Every
Post:	Learning Directorate Lead for Vulnerable Groups Head of Virtual School	Role:	Chairman, Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee
Email:	Joanna.Pallett@cambridgeshire.gov.uk	Email:	Lis.Every@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel:	01223 715412	Tel:	(office) 01223 706398

- 1           **Background**
- 1.1        The Virtual School is a statutory requirement of the Local Authority. This paper outlines the role of the Virtual School, data relating to educational attainment and the relationship between the work of the Virtual School and other LA activities.
- 2           **Main Issues**
- 2.1        **The Role of the Virtual School**
- 2.1.1      The role of the Virtual School is to ensure that Cambridgeshire Looked After Children (LAC), wherever they are, have the opportunity to fulfil their educational potential. We support children from Early Years through to completion of Post 16 education.
- 2.1.2      Every Looked After Child in Cambridgeshire will have a named member of the Virtual School team who supports and monitors their progress. The key role of the team is to support and challenge the professionals involved with Cambridgeshire LAC in order to ensure that they receive an education that best meets their needs, to ensure that they achieve their potential.
- 2.1.3      The Virtual School does not ‘teach’ the children and young people, its role is to ensure that providers meet the needs of Cambridgeshire LAC. However, the Virtual School does employ three tutors who provide an education for LAC who, for whatever reason, are out of school.
- 2.1.4      Key responsibilities for the team are:
- To monitor, challenge and quality assure the termly Personal Education Planning (PEP) process for all Cambridgeshire Looked After Children. Virtual School staff attend PEPs where concerns have been identified to support all stakeholders with the process.
  - To ensure that the Pupil Premium Plus is used effectively to improve educational outcomes. This is directly linked to interventions identified through the PEPs and/or additional funding is provided for short term additional interventions as required.
  - To use attainment data to inform the actions and interventions for individual Looked After Children.
  - To ensure that all professionals are informed about, and understand, the educational progress and attainment of the Looked After Children with whom they are involved.
  - To ensure that social care staff are engaged in, and understand, the need for careful planning to reduce the impact of placement changes on educational achievement.
  - To ensure that key staff in schools are informed of, and understand, social care processes for Looked After Children and to ensure that they understand the

requirement to prioritise Looked After Children within their schools with regard to admissions.

- To offer training for Designated Teachers, School Governors, Social Care staff, Foster Carers and other stakeholders regarding statutory duties for LAC as well as training on aspects which affect LAC proportionally more than the whole cohort, for example attachment, trauma or Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

2.1.5 A new role, following the Social Work Act 2017, is that the Virtual School now needs to provide advice and guidance to all parents/carers, schools and any other appropriate bodies to support the education and attainment of certain children noted as Previously Looked After Children (PLAC). This aspect of the work will require the development of a wide range of new data.

2.1.6 Whilst the Virtual School work only with Cambridgeshire LAC, all Cambridgeshire schools have access to the training and information on statutory requirements to support LAC. The information will be transferable to LAC pupils from other local authorities who are being educated in Cambridgeshire schools.

## 2.2 Cambridgeshire LAC education data

2.2.1 In many ways the raw data does not reflect the information required to monitor the progress and attainment of our children and young people. The cohort size and the transitional nature of LAC, in particular, mean that the statistics have to be interpreted with care. The Virtual School Management Board has recently decided to develop a data dashboard of 'local indicators' which will better reflect the progress of pupils and their attendance, exclusions and transitions. This will be presented alongside the data published by the DfE.

### 2.2.2 Early Years

Foundation Stage	Cambs LAC	Cambs all
Expected Level	30%	70%

### 2.2.3 Key Stage 1

The gaps in attainment between LAC and non LAC children is evident from Early Years onwards. National comparison data with LAC pupils is not yet available for 2017. In 2016, the combined reading, writing and maths results for KS1 Cambridgeshire LAC was 26% with National LAC figures of 33%.

Year 1, 2017

Phonics	Cambs LAC	Cambs all	National
	54%	80%	81%

Expected Progress end KS1	Cambs LAC	Cambs all	National
Reading	25%	73%	75%
Writing	25%	64%	68%

Maths	25%	73%	75%
Reading, writing and maths	19%	59%	63%

## 2.2.4 Key Stage 2

In 2016 Key Stage 2 (KS2) combined Reading, Writing and Maths results for Cambridgeshire LAC were higher than the National LAC figure. (Results not yet available for national LAC comparison 2017.)

In 2016 the gap between Cambs LAC and Cambs all was 23% and 2017 the gap was 42%, previously the lowest recorded gap was 43% (2014)

2017. 34% of all Year 6 LAC had an Education Health or Care Plan or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) identification.

2017. 28% of all Year 6 LAC had 2 or more school moves during primary phase.

### 2017 results

	Cambridgeshire LAC (29)	OC2 (23) (census figures March 2017)	Cambridgeshire all	National all
Combined reading, writing and maths	17%	13%	59%	62%
Reading	31%	30%	73%	71%
Writing	41%	43%	73%	76%
SPAG	41%	43%	75%	77%
Maths	31%	30%	72%	75%
2 + school moves	28%	35%		
No. with SEND/EHC	34%	43%		

### Year on Year Primary Analysis for Cambridgeshire LAC (\* changes of assessment and curriculum from 2016)

	2017	2016 *	2015	2014
<b>Total number of LAC</b>	29	35	28	
<b>Combined reading, writing and maths</b>	17%	29%	32%	32%
<b>Reading</b>	31%	34%	61%	52%
<b>Writing</b>	41%	37%	50%	56%
<b>SPAG</b>	41%	31%		
<b>Maths</b>	31%	34%	54%	44%
<b>CCC combined all</b>	59%	52%	76%	75%
<b>LAC/all gap.</b>	30%	23%	44%	43%

## 2.2.5 Secondary

In 2016 Cambridgeshire LAC pupils gained a higher percentage of 'GCSE English and

Maths combined' (National 15.9%, Virtual School 16.2%) and a higher level '5 A\*-C GCSE including English and Maths' than LAC pupils nationally (National 12.1%, Virtual School 14.9%). Data for LAC national comparison 2017 is not yet available.

Of all year 11 on roll at the time of the exams in 2017;

95% left with a formal qualification.

35% were not entered for GCSE however 15 non GCSE courses were completed with 31 passes.

Apart from English and Maths 29 GCSE subjects were taken with 117 passes.

37% had moved school during the secondary phase at least once (7% with 3+ moves).

	<b>Main cohort 2016-17*</b>	<b>OC2 cohort 2016-17* (census figures March 2016)</b>	<b>OC2 – 2015- 16 (census figures March 2015)</b>	<b>Main cohort 2015-16</b>
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN YR11 COHORT 2016-17</b>	68	46	38	86
- male	38	32	21	31
- female	24	14	17	26
<b>SOCIAL CARE DATA</b>				
No. leaving care	4	1	1	9
No. of LAC with 1 or 2 school moves within KS3/4	30%	41%	18.4%	26.3%
No. of LAC with 3 or 4 school moves KS3/4	7%	13%	n/a	n/a
No. of LAC with no school or care placement moves	54%	40%	n/a	n/a
No. of LAC with 1- 2 care placement moves KS3/4	29%	36%	n/a	n/a
No. of LAC with 3-4 care placement moves KS3/4	13%	23%	n/a	n/a
No. entering care in KS4	52%	34%	5.2%	24.5%
No. in care for 5 yrs or more	13.8%	50%	55%	43.8%
No. of LAC in county	51%	50%	47%	61.4%
No. of LAC out of county	47%	50%	52.4%	38.5%
<b>EDUCATION DATA</b>				

EHC or identified special need	31%	37%	34.2%%	31.5%
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children cohort	18%	2%	23%	0
No. attending alternative provision	11.7%	19%	15.7%	22.8%
Not entered for GCSE	35%	26%	17.5%	34.2%
5+ A+ C @GCSE incl E&M	6%	7%	18%	17%
Number of additional GCSE qualifications achieved in 29 subjects	117 passes	86 passes	n/a	n/a
Number of non GCSE qualifications achieved 15 subjects	31 passes	26 passes	n/a	n/a
Number attaining no qualifications	5%	15%	n/a	n/a
Expected levels of progress between KS2 and KS3 not achieved:	English 39% Maths 51% Science 48%	English 52% Maths 63% Science 63%	n/a	22%
KS2 data not available – high % of UASC	16%	13%	5.2%	21%

## 2.2.6

### **Post 16**

#### **Year 12 outcomes 2017**

14 Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in Year 12,  
6 left college early without completing course  
8 SEND pupils  
6 taking level 3 courses into year 13.  
4 level 2 courses, completed  
7 Level 1 courses, completed  
5 other courses, completed including apprenticeships  
1 in custody at the time of the exams.

#### **Year 13 level 3 outcomes 2017**

Student A- (B/Tec Distinction, Distinction)  
Student B- (B/Tec Distinction, Distinction, Merit)  
Student C- A Level Sociology C, Media Studies-B, Photography-D  
Student D - D\* D\* D.  
Student E- Maths A, Further Maths B, Physics B, Chemistry C. (Loughborough Maths Degree)

## 2.3 **The Virtual School, Accelerating the Achievement of Vulnerable Groups and the Education Achievement Board.**

2.3.1 The Head of the Virtual School is also the Lead for Vulnerable Groups. Developments in both have been designed based on the same principles:

- Supporting and challenging schools and key stakeholders,
- Providing advice and training,
- Sharing best practice
- Identifying schools underperformance for vulnerable groups and targeting support
- Coordinating the work of the LA to reduce duplication

In developing this work we have liaised via a strategy group with representatives from across the People and Communities Directorate, we have worked with a small group of head teachers to develop information sheets and classroom support papers. We offer audits for schools for LAC, SEND and Disadvantaged Groups.

2.3.2 The Virtual School Management Board has representatives from schools, social care, industry, the Diocese of Ely and a councillor. The Accelerating the Achievement of Vulnerable Groups also includes councillors.

2.3.3 LAC are one of the identifiable groups of children and young people vulnerable to educational underachievement but they are not the only group. Others – and these groups often overlap – include economically disadvantaged children (for example, children eligible for Free School Meals), children with Special Educational Needs, Children in Need, children with English as an Additional Language, Black/Minority/Ethnic children and young carers. The Accelerating Achievement of Vulnerable Groups Strategy Groups brings together Officers across the Council, with Member representation, to coordinate the local authority's monitoring, support, intervention and challenge for these groups of children.

2.3.4 The Educational Achievement Board holds Officers to account for educational achievement across the 0 – 19 age range. It is currently chaired by the Chair of the Children and Young People Committee.

## 3 **Alignment with Corporate Priorities**

### 3.1 **Developing the local economy for the benefit of all**

3.1.1 An appropriately skilled workforce is essential to Cambridgeshire's economic prosperity. Our aim is that all children achieve their potential, including LAC. High quality provision for this group of vulnerable students reduces the risk of them becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).

3.2 **Helping people live healthy and independent lives**

3.2.1 A quality education and the acquisition of appropriate qualifications is one of the best ways of ensuring that LAC are able to lead healthy and independent lives.

3.3 **Supporting and protecting vulnerable people**

3.3.1 A key purpose of the Virtual School is to ensure that this group of vulnerable children and young people who are at risk of failing to achieve have access to a relevant curriculum that is appropriate for their needs and meets statutory and legal requirements

4 **Significant Implications**

4.1 Resource Implications  
n/a

4.2 Statutory Legal and Risk Implications  
n/a

4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications  
n/a

4.4 Engagement and Communication Implications  
n/a

4.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement  
n/a

4.6 Public Health Implications  
n/a

Source Documents	Location
None	