

Corporate Parenting Panel

21st April 2015

Annual Report of the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Panel

Recommendation

That the Corporate Parenting Panel:

- 1) Approve the Annual Report 2015/16; and
- 2) Submit the Annual Report to Cabinet for consideration at the meeting scheduled for 14th May 2015.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Warwickshire County Council's Corporate Parenting Panel leads, on behalf of the Council, the collective responsibility for delivering improved services and better outcomes for looked after children, young people and care leavers.
- 1.2 The safeguarding and wellbeing of children and young people in care is the responsibility of all elected members, partner organisations and staff, and it is the role of the Corporate Parenting Panel to ensure that everyone is aware of their role and asks "would this be good enough for my child" in considering health, education, employment, training, placement and housing outcomes for looked after children, young people and care leavers.
- 1.3 The Corporate Parenting Panel ensures there is good communication between elected members and the Children in Care Council which represents Looked After Children in Warwickshire.

2.0 Children in Care Council (CiCC)

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel, which has six members, is supported by lead officers who supply information on the services provided by Warwickshire County Council for children and young people in care. The Panel members discuss the information contained in the reports to be satisfied that support is provided to achieve the best possible outcomes for looked after children and young people.
- 2.2 The Corporate Parenting Panel meetings are attended by representatives of the Children in Care Council who participate in the meetings.

- 2.3 Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel attend the Children in Care Council meetings on a rota basis, as observers to respond to any queries that may arise and to ensure an open dialogue between the CiCC and the Council.
- 2.4 Councillor Jenny St.John has worked with the Children in Care Council on developing training packages and Councillor St.John and the Chair were involved with a group brought together to scope an e-training module for elected members and partners on corporate parenting. This is currently in the process of development.

3.0 Work Programme

- 3.1 The Corporate Parenting Panel operates a running work programme of themed meetings. At each meeting members report back to the Panel on any CiCC meetings they have attended and receive a performance dataset. There is also usually at least one member of the Children in Care Council at Panel meetings, who contribute to all discussions and are able to bring their own experiences to those discussions.
- 3.2 Themed meetings have included:

Focus on Care Leavers and Independent Housing

The Panel considered the increased responsibility of the Council for young people aged 16-17, and in particular the work being done with housing partners to maximise opportunities for positive working and dealing with the increase in the number of young people needing housing. It was noted at this meeting that despite this being an area of some of the biggest savings for the Council that the challenge was to look at better ways of working to continue to improve the outcomes for young people.

Social Care Compliments and Complaints

The Panel learned that the most frequent area for complaints that relate to young people, are in relation to those young people who are in foster care - usually teenagers who are either in foster care or are leaving care are most likely to use the complaints procedures directly themselves. It was noted that the current leaflet for young people in care was being refreshed, including information to help children and young people understand how they could make a complaint or compliment. Members were also pleased to note that Customer Relations Service attends the Children in Care Council meetings.

Fostering and Adoption Services

The Panel receives information on fostering and adoption within their dataset report to each meeting. In addition they have received additional reports on policies such as the Sibling Policy.

Health related issues for Children in Care

The Panel met with representatives from the three Warwickshire Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) as well as the Director of Commissioning from the Arden, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Area Team (NHS England). The Panel were responding to a survey carried out by Healthwatch Warwickshire in 2013 – ‘Young People’s GP Experience Survey’, as well as a number of comments made by CiCC about their own experiences with GPs.

It is important that all partners understand the vulnerability of children and young people in care, which had been evidenced in research, particularly in areas such as early pregnancy and mental health. To this end, all agencies have to make every contact count and consider all needs and concerns of children in care. It is vital that that they are signposting them to appropriate services.

The Panel were pleased that there was the recognition of this as a priority and look forward to having the CCGs and NHS England report back on progress in 2015.

Mental Health Services for Children in Care

The Panel received a report on the Journeys Service, which is commissioned jointly with Coventry City Council to provide services to children and young people in care or adopted. Journeys provide one to one support for young people, family counselling; support for foster carers/adoptive parents; support groups and training for foster carers/adoptive parents and training and consultation for schools and other professionals.

72% of children and young people in care experience emotional wellbeing issues, and this service is aimed at early intervention and the prevention of the escalation of these issues. The Panel were impressed by the clear enthusiasm and commitment of Journeys to make a difference.

Virtual School

The Panel look at the exam results for children in care each year, as well as educational attainment more generally. For 2013/14 18% of children in care who entered the GCSE exams received 5 A*-C grade. Steve Pendleton, Virtual School Head reported to the Panel that on reflection, and following a discussion with head teachers, there was a need to look at measures of success differently for children and young people in care. The current measures, which would need to continue to be monitored, were inappropriate as a measure for some looked after children such as asylum seekers who had not been able to speak English fluently but who still make excellent progress at school.

The Virtual School will be reviewing how the positive results that were being achieved can be reflected more appropriately. This would give a truer picture

of the impact of his service and the support they gave, and whether they were making a difference. The Panel received assurance that every effort was made to consider any necessary support to help children in care reach their full potential and that extra career support was going to be given to Year 11 and 12 to help them with their career plans and employability.

Members of the Panel also attended the Awards Event for Children in Care in November 2014, which was held to celebrate the academic and personal achievements of children and young people in care.

Finally the Panel has worked on and endorsed a 'key questions' document for elected members that has been distributed alongside quarterly reports of Warwickshire looked after population by ward and school



**Councillor Chris Williams
Chair – Corporate Parenting Panel**

Background papers

None.

	Name	Contact Information
Report Author	Ann Mawdsley	annmawdsley@warwickshire.gov.uk 01926 418079
Head of Service	Sarah Duxbury	sarahduxbury@warwickshire.gov.uk
Strategic Director	David Carter	davidcarter@warwickshire.gov.uk
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Bob Stevens	cllrstevens@warwickshire.gov.uk