

Corporate Parenting Panel – Meeting held on Tuesday, 21st November, 2023.

Present:- Councillors Hulme (Chair), Dauti, Qaseem (In-part), Rana and Tomar

Non-Voting Members

Sue Butcher, Executive Director of People (Children) & CE of Slough Children First (SCF)

Lynette Jones–Jardine, NHS Frimley ICB

Caroline Bartos, Accommodation Group Manager (In-part) (SBC)

Cherie Sears, Virtual School Head

Lead member: Cllr Kelly (In-part)

In Attendance:

Reshma Bessesar, Head of Service, Children Looked After (SCF)

Kay Jones, Head of Service, Sufficiency & Permanency (SCF)

Susan Chapman, Service Manager, Adoption (SCF)

Kate McCorriston, Head of Service, HR & OD (SCF)

Saima Arif, Head of Regulated Services (SCF)

Neil Hoskinson, Interim Associate Director, Education (SBC)

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Rana and Lianne Garstang & Liz Jones

PART 1

20. Declarations of Interest

Councillor (Cllr) Dauti declared a personal interest by virtue of providing an individual support group for Kinship Carers, and as a carer.

21. Minutes of the last meeting held on 21 September 2023

The Panel Resolved to: Agree the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2023 as a correct record.

22. Feedback from Development Session and Next Steps

The panel agreed that the Corporate Parenting Panel Workshop led by the LGA (local government association) on 26 October 2023, had provided an informative and helpful overview of corporate parenting and the role of the CPP.

(Caroline Bartos joined the meeting)

It discussed that further work was needed in promoting the principles of corporate parenting and the importance of the Corporate Parenting Panel, to all councillors (Cllrs), officers and partner agencies.

Training sessions led by the LGA would therefore be arranged for (Cllrs) and officers in 2024. It was also proposed that this training should also be incorporated with the currently arranged training for CLT (corporate leadership team). The training for CLT would be in the form of a workshop during the day, followed by an evening session for the Cllrs. Further details would be provided following liaison with the LGA.

The director of children's services, chief executive of Slough Children First (SCF) requested a written submission from the LGA to evidence the workshop session they had facilitated.

The Panel Resolved to: Note the feedback from the development session- the next steps.

23. Children, Young People and the Corporate Parenting Panel

The director of children's services, chief executive of Slough Children First (SCF) provided a verbal report on the progress of Children, Young People and the Corporate Parenting Panel. Panel members were invited to put forward ideas about ways young people could be involved and be encouraged to participate at meetings.

Members noted that progress had been made by Slough Borough Council (SBC) making care experience a protected characteristic, and that the Participation Strategy had been approved at the recent Cabinet meeting.

(Cllr Kelly joined the meeting)

Some of the ideas put forward, and ways young people were already contributing include:

- Young people were already involved in the recruitment processes (of senior officers and foster carers).
- Using available links to individual groups and families to connect with and communicate with young people.
- Working with a participation company.
- Having coffee mornings locally with young people.
- Having Question Time sessions.
- Seeking ideas from young people about rebranding.
- Identify a number of young people and establish whether they would be interested in chairing a CPP meeting.
- CPP members partnering up with a group of young people.
- Engage with and encourage young people at celebration events and use the opportunity to promote the CPP.
- To encourage young people to collect their Christmas cards and presents in person, where they could 'meet and chat'.

The Panel Resolved to: Note the Feedback from Development Session and Next Steps

24. Draft Corporate Parenting Action Plan 2023/24 - Update

The Panel received an update on the Draft Corporate Parenting (CPP) Action Plan 2023/24 (circulated in the Supplementary agenda) from the SCF head of service, sufficiency & permanency. The document incorporated the priorities from SCF Business & Improvement Plan, Sufficiency Strategy and recommendations from the 2023 Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Parenting Peer review.

Members also received a presentation which provided an update on the progress of the CPP Action Plan. The five priority aims were highlighted as follows:

1. Corporate Parenting Panel best practice development
2. Corporate approach to Corporate Parenting
3. Further Development of our Local Offer for CEYP
4. Ensure Active Participation and Engagement with our CLA and CEYP
5. Themed activities linked to Pledges

Further consideration regarding panel membership needed to be progressed to ensure full relevant membership, including representatives from the voluntary sector and attendance of portfolio holders.

During discussion members agreed that it would be beneficial for a session on performance to be arranged in order to monitor how well the CPP was doing.

The following was noted:

- The SBC funding co-ordinator for the voluntary sector would be contacted as part of the process of including relevant partners on the CPP.
- Follow-up with Thames Valley Police to confirm representative on CPP.

A draft Corporate parenting strategy currently in progress would be reported to a future CPP meeting. The aim as part of the strategy was to ensure that CPP was included as part of the action plan of all services. It was noted that CPP Strategy should also be covered in LGA training sessions and further work to be undertaken to consider how for instance, the care experience a protected characteristic could be included in the Council's Corporate Plan.

Although the care experience as a protected characteristic had been filtered through to housing, it was highlighted that it had not yet been reflected in the housing preference for care leavers, currently placed in band B, as opposed to being in band A. However, members were reassured that young people were being allocated housing, regardless of being in Band B.

The Housing Allocations Policy was due to be reviewed in 2024, providing the opportunity for issues relating to allocations for care leavers to be included as

Corporate Parenting Panel - 21.11.23

part of the review. The Policy would need to go through the formal Council process of approval once the review had been completed.

The issue of young people being able to manage their rents and the growing number of young people needing housing in relation to the current shrinking housing environment was highlighted as a factors to be aware of. A review of the Joint Housing Protocol for care leavers was highlighted as an issue that needed to be progressed.

An issue relating to systems error was raised (where all data was not migrated from one system to another), and had resulted in some young people being missed out of the system. Members were reassured that this issue had now been resolved and all young people had manually been transferred to the new system.

In conclusion the Panel noted that development of the Local Offer was on-going and would be reported back to the Panel on completion. There had been a delay in revising the Pledges to Promise, due to the pending recruitment of a participation officer.

The Panel Resolved to: Note the Draft Corporate Parenting Action Plan 2023/24 – Update

25. Corporate Parenting Panel Scorecard

The SCF head of children looked after & support service presented the Corporate Parenting Panel Scorecard Summary for 2023 up to 10 October.

(Cllr Qaseem joined the meeting)

Members considered and discussed the performance indicators and highlighted the following:

- Welcomed the increase from the previous year to 61.5% of CLA (children looked after) (aged under 16 and in care for 2.5 years or more) in a stable placement but noted was lower compared to statistical neighbours at 92% in the same period. Members requested further details as to the reason why this was the case. It was highlighted that finding the right placements for children was a challenge nationally and the complexities of the placements were contributory factors.
- Noted that CLA seen alone within timescale had risen from the previous year to 85.7% and asked whether those waiting to be seen were placed as priority. It was confirmed that social workers placed the children as priority to be seen before six weeks.
- There had been an increase to 50% from the previous year of CEYP (care experienced young people) (aged 19-21) that were in Education, Employment or Training (EET). Members pointed out that this was still

Corporate Parenting Panel - 21.11.23

an issue and should be raised during proposed training sessions and also put forward to CLT to consider job opportunities for CEYP. It was noted that the SCF head of Service, HR & OD would look at SBC job application form and find out whether CLT could review and consider job opportunities for Care Experienced young people. The Virtual School head confirmed that the school worked with CEYP to prepare them for working life as part of their Pathway Plans.

- Noted that that the average number of young people allocated to CEYP Personal Advisors had increased to 27.1 compared to the previous year (24.8).

The Panel Resolved to: Note the Corporate Parenting Panel Scorecard

26. Sufficiency Strategy - Taking it Forward

The SCF head of service, sufficiency & permanency presented the Sufficiency Strategy, which outlined the Council's strategic approach to securing sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of children in care

Members noted that the Sufficiency Duty (Section 22G of the Children Act 1989) required all local authorities to take strategic actions to secure, so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for children in their care within their local authority area, and for those children who require accommodation to promote their welfare; that meets their needs.

Five key Sufficiency Priorities areas were highlighted as follows:

- Strengthen Early Help, Edge of Care and reunification
- Fostering – recruitment, retention and development
- Robust commissioning framework
- Achieving Permanence at the earliest opportunity
- Leaving care

Five specific work streams would be set up and Led by heads of services as project leads and with the CPP having oversight of governance. The Sufficiency Board would be overseen by SCF and would be meeting at the end of January 2024.

It was confirmed that the strategy had been approved at the Cabinet meeting on 20 November 2023 and Cabinet required to be provided regular updates.

The Panel Resolved to: Note the Sufficiency Strategy - Taking it Forward update.

27. Corporate Parenting Strategy - Update on Progress

This item had been covered in items 4 & 7.

28. Annual Adoption Report - April 2022 to March 2023

The SCF adoption service manager presented the annual Voluntary Adoption Agency Report for April 2022 – March 2023, which outlined details about the performance of SCF Voluntary Adoption Agency in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for adoption and statutory guidance.

In summary, it was noted that the Slough Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA) sat within the bounds of Coram Ambitious for Adoption Regional Adoption Agency (RAA), which delivered adoption services for SCF. A new adoption service manager had been in position since January 2023.

Following the Ofsted inspection in February 2023, the Slough VAA received a 'good' rating, and one of the positive highlight from the inspection, was that family finding was carried out with diligence and rigour with staff committed to achieving adoption efficiently and ensuring the best possible match.

The following points were highlighted:

- 7 children had been placed for adoption, including 3 children placed in Early Permanence. Two of the children placed with Early Permanence, who were also approved as foster carers.
- 3 children had been placed with adopters from Coram Ambitious for Adoption RAA.
- 10 ADM (agency decision maker) decisions had been made. The ADM made decisions relating to the best interest of the child (also in the case of approved adoptions).
- 7 placement orders were made but was still ongoing for two children due to changes in their plans.

Members noted and referred to the financial report, Coram Ambitious RAA Key Objectives for 2023/24 and the Slough Adoption Team Objectives for 2023/2024 set in the report circulated with the agenda.

The Panel Resolved to: Note the Annual Adoption Voluntary Adoption Agency Report for April 2022 – March 2023.

29. Local Offer for Care Experienced Young People (CEYP)

The head of children looked after & support service informed the Panel that the Local Offer for Care Experienced Young People was currently being finalised and would be circulated to Panel members once it had been completed.

The document would also be available on the SCF website, which was currently being redesigned.

Corporate Parenting Panel - 21.11.23

The Panel Resolved to: Note the update on the Local Offer for Care Experienced Young People

30. Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Reporting Schedule/Themed Topics

The Panel Resolved to: Note the Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Reporting Schedule/Themed Topics.

31. Members Attendance Record

The Panel Resolved to: Note the Members' attendance record.

32. Date of the next meeting: Date of next meeting - Tuesday 16 January 2024

The date of the meeting was confirmed as 16 January 2024.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.51 pm)