



AGENDA

SELECT COMMITTEE - CORPORATE PARENTING

Tuesday, 24th February, 2015, at 2.00 pm

Ask for: Denise Fitch/Gaetano Romagnuolo

Bowl Room, Sessions House, County Hall
Maidstone

Telephone 03000 416090/416624

Tea/Coffee will be available 15 minutes before the start of the meeting in the meeting room

Membership

Mrs Z Wiltshire (Chairman), Mr R E Brookbank, Ms C J Cribbon, Mr S J G Koowaree, Mr B Neaves, Mr M J Northey, Mr R J Parry, Mrs P A V Stockell and Mrs J Whittle

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the meeting - 3 February 2015 (Pages 3 - 8)
3. **2.00pm** - Ann Allen - Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel (Pages 9 - 10)
4. **3.00pm** - Tony Doran - Head teacher of Virtual School Kent (Pages 11 - 28)
5. **4.00pm** - Michael Wall and Sinead Whelan, Senior Practitioners, Kent County Council (Pages 29 - 32)
6. Wrap up session to identify key points from hearing sessions

EXEMPT ITEMS

(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)

Peter Sass
Head of Democratic Services
(01622) 694002

Monday, 16 February 2015

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE - CORPORATE PARENTING

MINUTES of a meeting of the Select Committee - Corporate Parenting held in the Swale 3, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 3 February 2015.

PRESENT: Mr R E Brookbank, Ms C J Cribbon, Mr S J G Koowaree, Mr M J Northey, Mrs P A V Stockell, Mrs J Whittle and Mrs Z Wiltshire

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs A D Allen, MBE

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms D Fitch (Democratic Services Manager (Council)), Mr G Romagnuolo (Policy Overview Research Officer) and Ms K Sanders (Business Intelligence Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Election of Chairman (Item 1)

Mrs P A V Stockell proposed and Mr G Kowaree seconded that Mrs Z Wiltshire be elected Chairman of the Select Committee.

RESOLVED that Mrs Z Wiltshire be elected Chairman of the Committee.

2. Draft Terms of Reference and Scope (Item 2)

(1) Mr Romagnuolo introduced the report which set out draft terms of reference and scope for the review. Also set out in the report was a proposed timetable based on the Select Committee presenting their report to County Council in May 2015, and suggested witnesses for evidence gathering sessions.

(2) The Committee discussed the report and made a number of points and suggestions which included the following:

- In response to a question on the existence of national guidelines for corporate parents which set out the legal definition of the role, including the accountabilities and protection for Members within a legal framework, Mr Romagnuolo confirmed that this was included in point 1 of the draft terms of reference and that there were responsibilities for the council as a whole and for individual members.
- Mr Romagnuolo confirmed that the corporate parent role applied to all County Council Elected Members.

- It was noted that references to “children in care” should be amended to “children and young people in care” as the corporate parent role remained in place for some until the age of 25 years.
- A Member referred to the recent press reports about the trafficking of children and young people, and the involvement of those within the care system, including the number of instances of children and young people in care within Kent being unaccounted for and whether this was within the scope of this review. The Committee were advised that there were monitoring mechanisms within the Directorate which included this and that the focus of this Select Committee review was the Member’s role as an elected parent and the influence that they would exert through this role to benefit children and young people in care.
- In response to a question Mr Romagnuolo advised that research was already underway into the best practice of other Local Authorities using Ofsted reports for those authorities performing well and other authority strategies would be provided to the Committee.
- Mentioned was made of a recent presentation that had been given by colleagues from Essex County Council about how they had moved from “poor” to “good” within a short period, it was suggested that the slides from this presentation should be made available to the Committee.
- The Committee were reminded of the proposed visit to visit to the Swattenden Centre (section 8) on Thursday 19 February 2015, which would provide the Committee with the opportunity to meet different age ranges of children and young people in care, plus some care leavers and apprentices, in an informal setting.
- Mr Romagnuolo stated that there would be an opportunity to seek written evidence to supplement the oral evidence given by witnesses.
- A Member referred to the importance of Members being aware of the national problem in relation to the educational outcomes of children and young people in care and questioned what was being done to address this in other countries.
- There was a general discussion around the review addressing how Members received information about children and young people in care and a view was expressed that Members were only informed of issues when they were about to be reported in the press rather than involving them at an the earliest stage.
- In relation to the list of possible witnesses Members stated that it contained too many KCC officers, and that they would prefer to hear more from people outside of the County Council to gain a wider insight into the issues and indications of best practise. It was suggested that it would be sufficient to have the following KCC witnesses Mrs Allen (Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel), Mr Oakford (Cabinet Member for Specialist Children’s Services) and Andrew Ireland (Corporate Director - Social Care, Health and Wellbeing) would be sufficient.
- The following witness suggestions were also put forward :
 - The designated nurse for children in care and the mental health team.

- Jenny Molloy, who had provided guidance to central government and who had written a book about her experiences of growing up in care.
- Camila Batmanghelidjh from Kids Company was another possible expert.
- Birth families, for these parents to give their views of the care system related to the members role as a corporate parent. (Mr Romagnuolo advised that there were sensitivities around approaching birth parents. This could be done via advocacy services to see if there was a willingness amongst birth parents to engaged with Members in their role as corporate parents.
- A further visit that would provide the opportunity to speak with child and young people in care or who had been in care, possibility to Porchlight.
- Young people in the criminal justice system, possibly on probation. NACRO might have someone who could speak on the criminalisation of children in care and related policies. Nick Wilkinson (KCC - Youth Offending Service (YOS) Lead Manager) who had written a report on the criminalisation of children in care.

(3) At the suggestion of Mr Romagnuolo it was agreed that there would be a 20 minute “wash-up” session added to the end of each Select Committee evidence gathering meeting to provide the opportunity for Members to identify key issues from that days hearings.

(4) The Committee expressed concern about the short timescale for gathering evidence if their report was submitted to the May meeting of the County Council. Ms Fitch advised the Committee that they could recommend to the Scrutiny Committee that the timescale of the review was extending to enable to Committee to submit its final report to the July meeting of the County Council. This review could be the trigger for other reviews in to specific areas.

(5) The Chairman referred to the possibility of all Members formally renewing their commitment to children and young people in care.

(6) RESOLVED that:

- (a) the draft terms of reference, scope and general approach for the review, as set out in the report, be approved subject to minor amendments suggested by Members which would be circulated to all Members of the Committee for confirmation.
- (b) the witness list be updated to include the suggestions put forward by Members circulated to all Members of the Committee for confirmation.
- (c) the Chairman and Spokesmen on the Scrutiny Committee be requested to agree to the Select Committees final report being submitted to the July 2015 meeting of the County Council rather that the May 2015 meeting.

(Post meeting note: A copy of the approved terms of reference and scope are attached as an appendix to these minutes.)

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Corporate Parenting Select Committee

Terms of Reference and Scope

Terms of Reference

1. To consider the definition of “Corporate Parent” and the variety of roles and duties associated with it.
2. To engage with, amongst others, children and young people in care to better understand what works well for them and what KCC can do to improve the fulfilment of its corporate parenting responsibilities.
3. To investigate best practice across the country and abroad of how elected representatives within local government engage with and support children and young people in care.
4. To examine the extent to which the monitoring mechanisms available to KCC Members are effective in ensuring the safety and well-being of children and young people in care.
5. For the Corporate Parenting Select Committee to make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.

Scope

The complexity of this topic and the tight timeframe of the review require a clear and focused approach. The key themes and aspects to be covered by this review are detailed below:

- 1. To consider the definition of “Corporate Parent” and the variety of roles and duties associated with it.**
 - a. To explore the definition of being a “Corporate Parent” and the legal implications associated with it.
 - b. To examine the roles and responsibilities that KCC Members and officers hold as Corporate Parents.

2. To engage with, amongst others, children and young people in care to better understand what works well for them and what KCC can do to improve the fulfilment of its corporate parenting responsibilities.

a. To engage with, and listen to, children and young people in care in Kent to better understand what works well for them and what KCC, and in particular KCC Members, can do to improve the fulfilment of their corporate parenting responsibilities.

b. To explore, in particular, corporate parenting responsibilities with regards to the educational outcomes of children and young people in care in Kent.

c. To gather evidence from KCC Members and officers, and representatives of relevant external organisations to inform the review.

3. To investigate best practice across the country and abroad of how elected representatives within local government engage with and support children and young people in care.

a. To explore best practice examples, both across the country and abroad, of how local authorities and their elected representatives engage with and support children and young people in care.

b. To consider how this best practice can be replicated to improve corporate parenting in Kent.

4. To examine the extent to which the monitoring mechanisms available to KCC Members are effective in ensuring the safety and well-being of children and young people in care.

a. To examine the extent to which the monitoring mechanisms available to KCC Members are effective in ensuring the safety and well-being of children and young people in care.

b. To identify further mechanisms, if necessary, to improve the effectiveness of this monitoring approach.

5. For the Corporate Parenting Select Committee to make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.

CORPORATE PARENTING SELECT COMMITTEE

Hearing 1

Tuesday 24 February 2015

Witness Guide for Members

Below are suggested themes and questions. They have been provided in advance to the witnesses to allow them to prepare for the types of issues that Members may be interested to explore. All Members are welcome to ask these questions or pose additional ones to the witnesses via the Committee Chairman.

Themes and Questions

Mrs Ann Allen, Member of Kent County Council and Chair of Kent's Corporate Parenting Panel

- Please introduce yourself and outline the roles and responsibilities that your post involves.
- What are your corporate parenting duties and responsibilities?
- In your view what constitutes good and effective corporate parenting?
- In your opinion, to what extent are KCC Members fulfilling their corporate parenting responsibilities?
- What else – if anything – can KCC Members do in order to fulfil their corporate parenting role?
- What are the key issues surrounding children and young people in care in Kent?
- To what extent are the monitoring mechanisms available to KCC Members effective in ensuring the safety and well-being of children and young people in care in Kent?
- To what extent, in your view, are children and young people in care in Kent involved in the decisions that affect them?
- Are there any other issues, with relevance to the review, which you would like to raise with the Committee?

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Corporate Parenting Select Committee

Tony Doran, Headteacher of Virtual School Kent (VSK), Kent County Council

Biography

Tony is an experienced Senior Leader within education with a drive and passion in tackling disadvantage and underachievement. The last decade has been mostly spent within inner city and urban secondary schools in challenging situations, developing pastoral systems to support and engage all students in learning.

Between 2003 and 2009 Tony developed, implemented and evolved his Attitudes to Learning System, which received national recognition in 2007. This later led to a secondment into the Prime Ministers Delivery Unit as a consultant behaviour expert, during their 2008/9 National Behaviour Review.

The 2009/10 academic year was spent as a Behaviour and Attendance Adviser for the South East of England within The National Strategies, which included significant work with the Narrowing the Gap Team. This offered Tony a unique opportunity to see local and national issues and effective practice. These experiences over the last ten years have solidified a real optimism that through an effective multi agency, strategically co-ordinated approach we can break down barriers that our most vulnerable children face. Together it is our duty to facilitate better outcomes for children in care.

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CORPORATE PARENTING SELECT COMMITTEE

Hearing 1

Tuesday 24 February 2015

Witness Guide for Members

Below are suggested themes and questions. They have been provided in advance to the witnesses to allow them to prepare for the types of issues that Members may be interested to explore. All Members are welcome to ask these questions or pose additional ones to the witnesses via the Committee Chairman.

Themes and Questions

Tony Doran, Headteacher of Virtual School Kent (VSK), Kent County Council

- Please introduce yourself and describe the roles and responsibilities that your post involves.
- Please provide a brief outline of the main services provided by VSK. What are the key priorities of Virtual School Kent?
- How well are children and young people in care in Kent doing with their education? What are the key issues around looked-after children's education in Kent?
- What can KCC, and KCC Members in particular, do - if anything - to improve the education outcomes of children and young people in care in Kent?
- Please discuss the apprenticeships supported by VSK for young people in care and care leavers.
- What is the level of participation and engagement of children and young people in care in Kent in the decisions that affect them? What else – if anything – can be done to improve their involvement?
- In your view, what else – if anything – can KCC Members do in order to fulfil their corporate parenting role?
- Are there any other issues, with relevance to the review, which you would like to raise with the Committee?

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By: Tony Doran Headteacher VSK
 To: Corporate Parenting Select Committee
 Date: 24th February 2015
 Subject: Service Overview Report
 Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report provides Members with an overview of the impact and priorities for the Virtual School Head Teacher

1. Introduction

(1) This report intends to provide the committee with an overview of VSK's areas of responsibility and the impact that has been made.

2. Validated Outcomes 2013-14

5 Yr KS2 Trend Breakdown

	2009-10*	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Level 4+ Reading (New indicator from 2012-13)			54%	61%	65% *↑11%
Level 4+ Writing (New indicator from 2012-13)			44%	46%	59% *↑15%
NI99 (Level 4+ Reading and Writing)	38%	44%	50%	50%	56% *↑18%
NI 100 Level 4+ Maths	43%	44%	40%	49%	57% *↑14%
NI99 + 100 combined	36%	36%	36%	39%	44% *↑18%

Key Stage 2 eligibility and performance of children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months 2013-2014

The National trend shows Reading down by 1% (63%), Writing up 4% (55%) and Maths static (56%). Kent shows an improvement in all three tests ~ Reading up 4% (65%), Writing up 13% (59%) and Maths up 8% (57%), which is now in line the latest validated NA for all three. Only Warwickshire is above the NA with all other counties below average in at least one test. It is also important to note that since the development of the Virtual School in 2010, the percentage of eligible Kent children in care achieving Level 4+ in English(NI99) has improved by 18%pts; Level 4+ Mathematics (NI100) has improved by 14%pts and those achieving both English and Mathematics has improved by 8%. This is a very encouraging trend that indicates the potential of achieving 5 GCSE's A*-C including English and Mathematics.

5Yr Yr 11 GCSE Trend Breakdown

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
NI101	6%	11%	15%	15%	13% ↓2% pts
Special Educational Needs					
Total SEN	56%	52%	67%	72%	↑29%
SA	10%	6%	13%	11%	↑10%
SA+	12%	18%	31%	23%	↑92%
SSEN	33%	28%	23%	38%	↑15%
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)					
National Average	3%				
South East Average	5%				
London	8%				
Kent	10% (↑233% on National Average)				

Key Stage 4 eligibility and performance of children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months 2013-2014

Due to the significant changes this year to assessment and examination processes there will be no national comparison data. These changes include (i) early GCSE entries dis-incentivised; (ii) English GCSE final examination weighting has been increased to 60%; (iii) shift to end of course examination approach. 2013-14 academic year saw nearly a 20% increase in the number of eligible children, this means that each young person has a smaller impact on the overall percentage achieved. Kent has showed a downturn on last year's performance which is lower than the Kent all learners downturn of 4%, however it is important to note that the changes outlined above impact vulnerable learners who may have had gaps in their learning through no fault of their own. Based on SFR January 2014 based on last year's Key Stage 4 results Kent was one of only three counties nationally that showed an improvement in all three tests ((a) 5+GCSEs A*-C or equivalent (b) 5+ GCSEs A*-C or equivalent including E&M and (c)A*-C GCSEs in E&M)

5Yr Attendance And Exclusion Trend Breakdown

Ac. Year	'09/10	'10/11	'11/12	'12/13	'13/14
Performance Assessment Framework CF/C24 25+days Absence * Indicator changed to Persistent Absence (PA) from 2011/12	16.3%	12%	*10.5%	*9.5%	*9.5%
% Permanent Exclusion (PEX)	1%	0.9%	0.54%	0.39%	0.39%

2013-14 was another positive year for our young people in terms of attendance and permanent exclusions levels. These two indicators which are in line with national averages for CiC have remained stable over the past two years. It is important to note however that since the development of the Virtual School persistent absenteeism has reduced by 42% and Permanent Exclusion has reduced by 61%.

3. Participation and Engagement 2013-14

Apprentices

(1) During the last academic year VSK has supported 7 Apprentice Participation Workers. Four Care Leavers have successfully completed a Level 2 qualification, one has been retained by VSK and is carrying out an Advanced Apprenticeship and is now the Senior Apprentice. This young person also sits on the Corporate Parenting Panel and advocates as the voice of the child/young person in care/care leaver. Two former apprentices have been successful in finding full time employment and one has returned to further education. A further three young people have gained a place on the programme and are currently working and studying for a Level 2 or 3 qualification. Whilst studying for a qualification in Business and Administration the Apprentices also study and take recognised functional skills qualification in Maths, English and ICT if they have not been successful previously in attaining a C grade at GCSE. A further two young people are due to commence their apprenticeship in the next couple of months.

(2) The apprentices are involved in several work steams:

Our Children in Care Council – OCYPC

(3) Virtual School Kent continues to support the OCYPC. Currently there are 20 members, which include the VSK Care Leaver apprentices. The Council have met 4 times during the last academic year and have been attended by the Lead Member and the Director for Specialist Children’s Services several times. The member ship of the OCYPC has increased over the past 4 years:

2011	2012	2013	2014
8 members	7 members	16 members	20 members

(4) Work is underway with the social care teams in the districts to develop the OCYPC further and a ‘Taster day’ is arranged to take place on 30th October. The aim of the day is to encourage more children in care to sign up to being on the council in order that it fully reflects the cohort of children in care in Kent. (See Appendix 1)

(5) Recent feedback from current OCYPC members:

“I am a member of the OCYPC because I am able to express my views on different circumstances in a young person’s life. I am able to show my emotions well and show that I can help people if needed.”

“I am part of OCYPC because it makes children know that being in care is not that bad and that the future gets better. I enjoy going to the meetings, going to activity days.”

“I am a member of the OCYPC because I believe that the views of children in care are the vital key to a happier life in care. In addition to going to the OCYPC meetings I enjoy acting and swimming: I would not be accessible to these clubs if I didn’t live with my wonderful carers- Nett and Neil. I have two sisters and I am certain that by continuing to participate I am making both their life and mine a lot better and happier.”

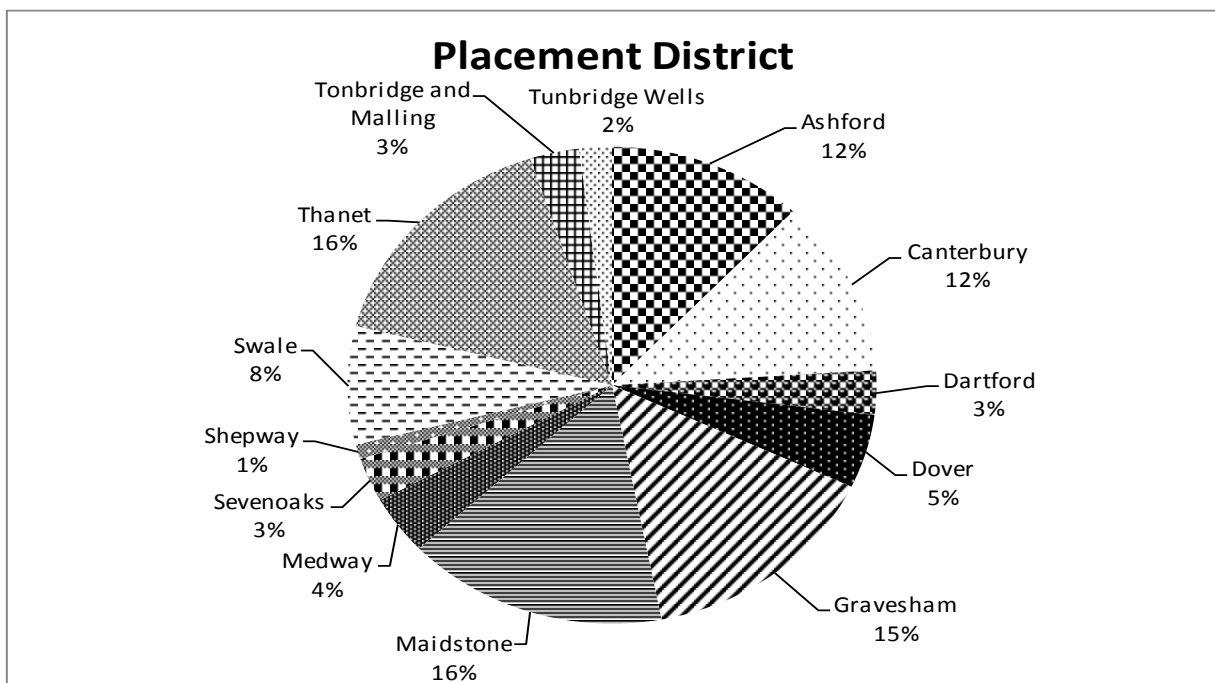
“I am a member of the OCYPC because I like to help other people with their problems and make ‘being in care’ not that bad.”

Participation activity days

(6) Virtual School Kent have organised 13 participation activity days from September 2013 to July 2014 during the October, February, and Summer school holidays for Kent Children in Care (CiC).

297 CiC attended at least one activity day with 55 children attending two or more activities. The age range of young people attending has been aged between 3 – 17 years.

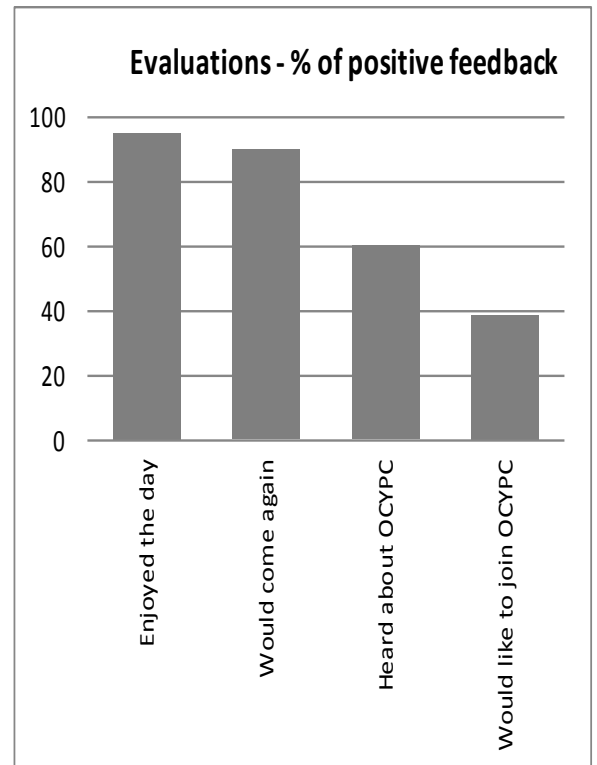
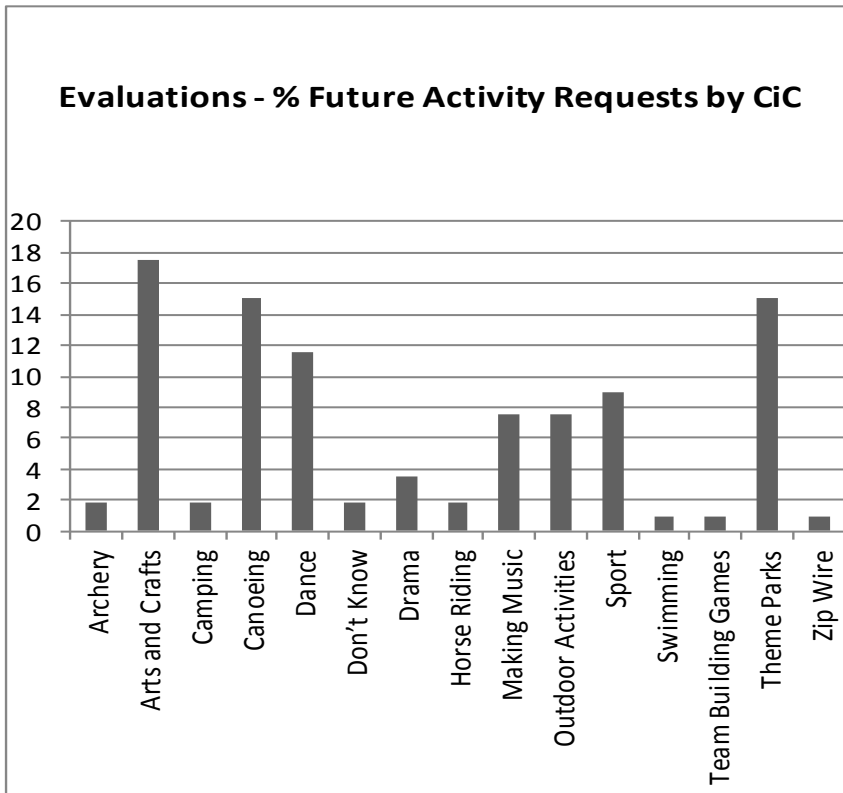
(7) The participation days have been organised and run with the assistance of VSK's Apprentice Participation Worker Team and have covered a wide range of activities including sports, outdoor pursuits, music & dance and arts & crafts. Six participation activity days were held during the Summer 2014 school holidays with 128 young people attending which evidences a 35% improvement over the previous summers attendance. In order to reach as many young people as possible, the days took place at various locations around the county – Folkestone, Maidstone, Margate, Rochester, Sheerness and West Farleigh.



(8) Higher numbers of children and young people attending Participation Days in the last year reside in the Maidstone, Gravesham and Thanet districts. Work has taken place to make contact children and young people in harder to reach areas.

Evaluations

(9) Evaluations have been completed by the children after each event and their views have been sought with regard to the type of days they would like run in the future. These views have been taken into consideration in planning future events and this Summer the horse riding and canoeing events were very sought after. Youth Opportunities Fund and funding from Members has been successfully applied for in 2013 to help with the costs of providing extra days as they are proving to be extremely popular with the young people. Various funding streams are also being investigated in 2014 to help fund extra days as the demand is increasing.



(10) Participation days have also been used to facilitate completion of the 'Every Child Matters' Survey and to interview children and young people and listen to their views for the Never Stop Listening DVD that follows up on the issues raised in the Care to Listen DVD that was made in 2008.

(11) Recent feedback from young people attending Summer 2014 Participation Activities:

"I loved the VSK art and crafts day and I loved making my wiggly worm!"

"Making my T-Shirt was my favourite part of the day of the Art Day"

"I would like to do a farming day in future"

"At the Horse-riding Day, my favourite part was brushing down the horses"

"ALL DAY was my favourite part of the day!!"

"The best thing I have done was horse- riding, it's a dream come true"

"The best part of the day was when we did the quad biking"

"Rock climbing was best as I went a lot higher than I did when I went with my school in 2013"

"I enjoyed meeting new friends"

"I love coming to the VSK activity days because I meet up with my brothers and sisters there"

Surveys

(12) VSK Officers and the apprentices have supported young people completing various surveys during the last year, including the Your Voice Matters survey and the survey that accompanies the LILAC Assessment. They have also assisted with creating a 'You said, we did' response to the Your Voice Matters survey, to ensure appropriate feedback is given to children in care who took the time to complete it. (See Appendix 2)

Communication

(13) VSK continues to work on improving the communication channels with children in care, which is a challenge. During the last academic year a quarterly newsletter has been established, with the 4th edition currently being written. This is created by the VSK apprentices on behalf of the OCYPC. The VSK apprentices have also engaged the OCYPC and other children in care through focus groups and participation activity days to work on developing a young person friendly version of the Kent Pledge, a coming in to care pack and a leaving care charter.

There is continual development of the [Kent Cares Town](#) website with new articles, pictures, events being added on a regular basis. A large piece of work that the VSK Apprentice Team has supported this year is the development of the 'Never Stop Listening' DVD. This is a follow up to the 2008 'Care to Listen' DVD to find out what the lives of Kent Children in Care are like now. And what has changed in the past 6 years. The Apprentices presented the film along with a paper for Members to reaffirm their commitment to Kent Pledge and Care Leavers Charter at the July full council meeting.

The apprentices are also involved in the following work streams:

- Staff Recruitment – sitting on interview panels for Senior and Middle Managers within KCC
- 1:1 support work with children and young people in care (supported 37 young people in last academic year)
- Supporting children with the completion of their e-PEP questions
- Supporting focus groups arranged by other parts of the Council to ensure the voices of children in care are heard in various initiatives eg. KIASS and Co-production.

4. Health 2013-14

(1) A specified member of staff (*Health Lead*) within VSK who has experience of social care and policy & performance takes a lead role for SCS in terms of developing policy & monitoring health assessment and strengths & difficulties (SDQ's) performance. This entails working with social care managers, social workers, NHS commissioners, provider managers and clinicians on a regular basis and has involved meeting with the Judiciary.

(2) The Care quality commission (CQC) undertook a review of health services for Children Looked After and Safeguarding in Kent (West Kent, Swale and DGS) in May 2014. An item tabled at the Corporate Parenting Panel on 24th October 2014 outlines the finding of the CQC review and the actions that KCC has agreed to work on jointly with health colleagues to address issues raised. The *Health Lead* within VSK will be the identifiable person from within SCS to work with health colleagues on these actions.

(3) The LAC nursing team continue to sit within the two locality bases of VSK (Brook House & Worrall House) and are an integral part of the multi-agency service. The team has been actively recruiting and it has expanded during recent months in order to meet the demands placed on the service.

(4) The service is looking to respond to the issues raised in the Your Voice Matters survey and has committed to:

- *Working with the OCYPC to create a special invitation for children & young people to their health assessments*
- *Issuing a post card to young people aged 15 Plus with the name and phone number of their nurse and asking their social worker or personal adviser to talk with them about this.*
- *The nursing team want to be able to offer a more flexible service, so they can hopefully see you in a place and at a time that suits both you and them*
- *For young people planning on leaving care, the nurses wants to be able to see them and talk with young people about their health to make sure they know about their health history and know to access health services in their area.*

(5) VSK works with colleagues in KCC outside of SCS to support other work streams aimed at improving emotional health and well-being of children in care and care leavers.

3Yr Dental and Health Assessment Trend Breakdown

	Dental checks			Health Assessments		
	2012 Percentage of children who had their teeth checked by a dentist	2013 Percentage of children who had their teeth checked by a dentist	2014 Percentage of children who had their teeth checked by a dentist	2012 Percentage of children who had their annual health assessment	2013 Percentage of children who had their annual health assessment	2014 Percentage of children who had their annual health assessment
ENGLAND	82.36	82.03		86.28	87.29	
Kent	79.57	84.03	96.6 ↑15%	76.17	83.61	88.1 ↑5%

VSK has seen three year on year improvements in both Dental and Review Health Assessments. This year has evidenced a 15% improvement in dental checks and a 5% improvement in our young peoples review health assessments against 2013 outcomes. Based on latest validated national averages our health outcomes are in line or exceeding the national average.

5. Looked After Children Pupil Premium Grant(PP+)

(1) On the 20th February the Department for Education published the new Conditions of Grant for the Pupil Premium 2014-15. This marks the biggest shake up in the grant since its conception. There are numerous significant changes within the document, however the main changes include:-

- **The amount** - As of April will be £1900
- **Responsibility** - No longer goes directly to the school but is held by the Virtual School
- **Application** - Not £1900 per child but a lump sum for the VS to co-ordinate support to raise attainment accelerate progress and narrow the attainment gap for children in care.

(2) These changes are very exciting for our young people, as the grant has real potential to make a positive impact. This may however cause friction between the schools and the Virtual School as they have historically received this money which was not ring fenced to be spent of our young people. This issue is further compounded by the late release of the conditions of grant so close to the start of the next financial year. To mitigate these issues, VSK are worked closely with The Executive School Funding Forum, School Funding Forum, Area Headteacher Networks and with KCC Finance Team. It is vital that we maintain our fantastic relationship with the schools so that we can work closely to maximise support for our young people. VSK decided to fund 5/12ths of the PP+ £1900(£790) to each school multiplied by the number of CiC on Roll on the 30th March 2014, with the understanding that September 2014 onward their would be a grant application approach based on need.

(3) VSK has implemented an initial PP+ policy which has been circulated to every school, social work team, educational teams and foster carers throughout June and July with a view to review this new approach in early 2015.

6. Youth Mental Health First Aid England – Youth Champions Award

(1) Virtual School Kent were awarded second place in the Youth category for training staff in social services, schools, colleges and other professionals to recognise and respond to mental health issues among our children in care.

(2) We have run a series of Youth Mental Health First Aid courses as part of our work to promote and support the well-being of vulnerable children. We have commissioned ten courses so far and as a result have achieved the Mark of Excellence for Youth Mental Health First Aid which we're very proud to hold. We intend to continue our commitment to improving the emotional and mental health well-being of children and young people and view this training as an integral part of our strategy to achieve this.

(3) In the UK, one in four people will experience mental ill health and MHFA is a practical way that people can use to support those who are affected. It is the mental health equivalent to First Aid training and provides participants with the skills and confidence to give crisis first aid for suicide and self-harm.

(4) The MHFA England Awards were presented at a ceremony at the House of Lords in front of an audience of 150 people. This is the fourth year that the organisation has celebrated achievements in this field and the awards identify examples of excellent projects and individuals, acknowledging innovation and high performance in raising mental health literacy across England.

(5) Poppy Jaman, CEO for MHFA England spoke at the event and said: "I am extremely proud that our organisation has taken the national MHFA Awards ceremony into its fourth year and, in doing so, continued to celebrate the fantastic work of our MHFA Instructors, the positives changes they are making within our society and our growing influence on the mental health agenda. This year, and for the first time, we opened the nominations up for public voting and the engagement has been far greater than we anticipated. "The feedback that I've been receiving is that an MHFA Award is now considered a coveted distinction of excellence in the field of mental health, and something which I believe is made even more special by being presented by our MHFA patron, Lord Kamlesh Patel at the prestigious House of Lords."

7. Priorities for 2014-15

(1) These currently are:

- Meeting the new requirements set down in July 2014 Statutory Guidance document “Promoting the educational achievement of looked after children – Statutory guidance for local authorities”. This includes mapping our young people’s educational progress termly (rather than bi-annually through PEP Review) and the age extension of Personal Education Planning (PEP’s) from Pre-school to 18 years of age (previous PEP’s were for Year R to Year 11 ages 4-16).
- Continuing Drive on improving academic and health outcomes. Particular focus on KS4 and overcoming impact of the national changes to examinations and assessment. These changes include (i) early GCSE entries dis-incentivised; (ii) English GCSE final examination weighting has been increased to 60%; (iii) shift to end of course examination approach
- Focus on developing the quality of PEPs (utilising the Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) conditions of grant as a lever
- Translating the positive work of Participation and Engagement into measurable impact outcomes ie “You said We did”, changes in Policy and changes in service delivery

8. New Local, regional and national initiatives

(1) These are:

- Paired Reading Scheme – This is an extremely effective programme which on average accelerates a young person’s reading age by 11+ months over the course of the 16 week programme
- Development of a school based Quality Mark for Trauma Aware / Attachment Friendly schools
- Developmental work with Brook Learning Trust to develop Trauma Aware and Attachment Friendly teaching approaches embedded within Initial Teacher Training (ITT) programmes in South East

9. Issues for 2015-16

- **Further National changes regarding examination equivalency**
- **Further National changes regarding school assessment and recording processes**
- **Effective engagement with schools regarding Pupil Premium us (PP+)**
- **New work streams**
 - (i) 16-18 Educational support**
 - (ii) Participation and Engagement extension of services provided**

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Corporate Parenting Select Committee

Michael Wall, Senior Practitioner, Kent County Council

Biography

I am Michael Wall, a Senior Practitioner (social worker).

I have worked for Kent County Council's Children's Services since 1996, initially unqualified in roles for: Education Welfare Service, Behaviour Support Service, and Residential Services.

I qualified in July 2000 and went on to work in Duty & Assessment (4 years), Family Support (2 years), Adolescent Services (8 years), before starting work with unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in January 2015.

I have experience of working with children under: Child Protection – Child In Need – Children in Care – Custody Disputes (court work in custody disputes).

I have particular experience in areas of: Domestic Abuse (and the impact on children), Substance Misuse, Direct work with Adolescents, and Group work.

Sinead Whelan, Senior Practitioner, Kent County Council

Biography

I am Sinead Whelan, a Senior Practitioner in the Children in Care Team of the Poltons Family Centre in Dover.

The primary aim of the Team is working with children in care. We work hard to achieve permanency for children, whether through long-term foster care or adoption.

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CORPORATE PARENTING SELECT COMMITTEE

Hearing 1

Tuesday 24 February 2015

Witness Guide for Members

Below are suggested themes and questions. They have been provided in advance to the witnesses to allow them to prepare for the types of issues that Members may be interested to explore. All Members are welcome to ask these questions or pose additional ones to the witnesses via the Committee Chairman.

Themes and Questions

Michael Wall and Sinead Whelan, Senior Practitioners, Kent County Council

- Please introduce yourselves and provide a brief description of the roles and responsibilities that your posts involve.
- In your experience, what are the main issues surrounding unaccompanied asylum seeking children in Kent? What can KCC Members do, as corporate parents, to resolve these issues?
- What can the Local Authority, and KCC Members in particular, do to ensure that children and young people in care in Kent are safe from sexual exploitation?
- To what extent are looked-after children and young people in Kent provided with appropriate accommodation while in the care of the Local Authority?
- In your opinion, to what extent are KCC Members fulfilling their corporate parenting responsibilities?
- What else – if anything – can KCC Members do in order to fulfil their corporate parenting role and improve the outcomes for children and young people in care in Kent?
- To what extent, in your view, are children and young people in care in Kent engaged in the decisions that affect them?
- Are there any other issues, with relevance to the review, which you would like to raise with the Committee?

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