

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL – 21 April 2026

MINUTES of the meeting held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone.

PRESENT: Pamela Williams (Chair), Adrian Kibble (Vice-Chair), Oliver Bradshaw, Alistair Brady, Martin Brice, Spencer Dixon, Tony Doran, Christine McInnes, Stephen Gray, Stuart Heaver, Thomas Mallon, Robert Mayall, Terry Mole, Kayleigh Leonard, Peter Osborne, Sharon Roots, Claudine Russell, Nancy Sayer, Tracy Scott, Colin Sefton and Caroline Smith

IN ATTENDANCE: Joanne Carpenter (Participation and Engagement Manager), Ingrid Crisan (Director for Operational Integrated Children's Services), Chris Nunn (Senior Management Information Officer), Connor Cruickshank (Apprentice Participation Worker), Kevin Kasaven (Director of Children's Countywide Services), Louise Fisher (Assistant Director Safeguarding Professional Standards & QA) and Georgia Humphreys (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies and substitutes

Apologies had been received from Ms Bride, Mr Horton, Dr Sturley for whom Mrs Roots was present as substitute and Ms Nolan for whom Mr Brady was present as substitute.

Mr Brice, Ms Sayer and Ms Fisher were in attendance virtually.

Chair's Announcements

1. The Chair expressed her thanks to the outgoing Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services for her contribution to the portfolio and welcomed Mr Webb who had been newly appointed to the position.
2. The Chair explained that the Cabinet Member had sent his apologies to the meeting but had provided a video update for the Panel.

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2026

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2026 were a correct record.

Participation Team update

1. Ms Carpenter, Participation and Engagement Manager, and her team updated the Panel on the engagement and enrichments activities that the Participation Team had planned and undertaken over the past few months. Additionally, the team highlighted the work of the Children in Care Councils, including the

development of a new Constitution and ideas for an updated website for Children in Care. The Team shared that there was a continuing increase in the number of young people regularly attending the Young Adults Council monthly meetings, which aimed to make young adults feel less isolated.

2. Ms Carpenter invited members of the Corporate Parenting Panel to attend the upcoming VSK Award celebrations, as well as the May Corporate Parenting Event.

RESOLVED that the Panel noted the update.

Kent Pledge Challenge

1. Ms Smith, Assistant Director of Corporate Parenting, introduced an update on the Kent Pledge Challenge. She explained that since the previous meeting of the Panel, two meetings had taken place with colleagues from the Management Information team. These discussions had focused on proposals to incorporate monitoring of the Kent Pledge into the Corporate Parenting scorecard, enabling the Panel to receive regular updates and view relevant data. Ms Smith highlighted that measures relating to sense of belonging and identity were being developed and would be presented graphically, in collaboration with the Management Information team.
2. The Panel agreed unanimously that information on the Kent Pledge should be included in the Corporate Parenting Scorecard.

RESOLVED that the Panel noted the update.

Verbal Update by the Cabinet Member

1. Mr Webb, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, provided the Panel with a video update, setting out his commitment to working collaboratively with Members, officers, and partner organisations to drive improved outcomes for children and young people.
2. Mr Webb acknowledged the significant role and responsibility of Council Members as Corporate Parents and emphasised the importance of ensuring that the voices, experiences, and aspirations of children and young people in KCC's care, as well as care leavers, are actively listened to and meaningfully reflected in decision-making.

RESOLVED that the Panel noted the update.

Children in Care Scorecard 6 month update

1. Mr Nunn, Senior Management Information Officer, introduced the update and gave an overview of the performance data and targets within the report.
2. In response to comments and questions it was said:
 - a. Officers explained that Pathway Plans were introduced when a young person in care reached the age of 16. Ms Smith advised that the plans were intended to support young people in planning their journey towards independence and covered areas including education, employment, finance, emotional health and wellbeing, and the development of independent living skills. Pathway Plans were reviewed every six months and when a young person entered the care leaver process, as well as being updated with their allocated Personal Adviser. Officers emphasised that the plans were designed to be ambitious, personalised and focused on each young person's aspirations, including future career goals.
 - b. It was explained that some Pathway Plans had not been reviewed within the required six-month timescale. Officers advised that this was due to staffing vacancies within the Care Leaver Service, alongside recruitment controls, which had resulted in increased caseloads for Personal Advisers. During this period, statutory visits had been prioritised. Officers confirmed that recruitment to vacant posts was underway and explained that staffing levels within the service had historically been stable.
 - c. A Member raised concerns regarding the comparatively low performance against the target for care leavers to be in education, employment or training. Mr Kasaven, Director of Children's Countywide Services, acknowledged these concerns and explained that the figures included Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). He explained that legislative restrictions meant some UASC were unable to access employment or education. He advised that approximately 40% of these young people were unable to work or participate in education due to their immigration status, despite often having high aspirations.
 - d. In response to a question regarding the percentage of children leaving care through adoption, Special Guardianship Orders and Child Arrangements Orders, Mr Kasaven provided an overview to the Panel. He also outlined the legal context relating to parental responsibility, advising that, historically, fathers were required to be married to the child's mother to automatically gain parental responsibility at birth, otherwise, this could be obtained through other means, including a court order.
 - e. A Member queried the reduction in the number of children being adopted. Officers explained that there had been an increased focus on identifying kinship care arrangements and wider family network options at an earlier stage. As a result, more children were being supported to

remain within their family networks where it was safe and appropriate, which had contributed to a reduction in adoption numbers.

- f. A Member expressed concern regarding the increase in timescales for placement orders, highlighting the change from 250 to 350 days. Ms Crisan, Director for Operational Integrated Children's Services, confirmed that this was a significant concern. She advised that the matter had been raised with the judiciary and that work was ongoing to reduce the length of time taken for court proceedings to conclude.
- g. In response to a question about the impact of delays in reaching a placement order on children, Ms Crisan explained that some children were removed from their parents immediately after birth and placed with prospective adopters while court proceedings continued. She highlighted that prolonged court oversight could be harmful and traumatic for both children and parents, particularly where uncertainty continued for an extended period.
- h. A Member sought further detail on the availability of educational psychologists. Ms McInnes, Interim Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, advised that performance data was monitored on a monthly basis and that, in the most recent reporting period, over 90% of Education, Health and Care Plans had been completed within statutory timescales. While a specific breakdown for children in care was not available, she confirmed that these children were prioritised and that performance had continued to improve since the period covered by the report.

RESOLVED that the Panel noted the performance data in the Corporate Parenting Scorecard.

Signed: