

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL – 4 June 2024

MINUTES of the meeting held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone.

PRESENT: Paul Bartlett (Chair), David Beaney, Dan Bride, Tom Byrne, Alison Farmer, Lesley Game, Stephen Gray, Kelly Grehan, Sarah Hamilton, Kayleigh Leonard, Nancy Sayer, Tracy Scott, and Caroline Smith.

ALSO PRESENT: Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services.

IN ATTENDANCE: Joanna Carpenter (Participation and Engagement Manager), Ingrid Crisan (Director – Operational Integrated Children's Services), Kevin Kasaven (Director of Children's Countywide Services), Nathan Moody, Hayley Savage (Democratic Services Officer), Mark Vening (Head of Fostering West)

Due to the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair the Committee resolved that Mr Paul Bartlett be elected as Chair for the meeting.

1. Apologies and Substitutes

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from David Brazier, Tony Doran, Sarah Hammond, Brian Horton, Dylan Jeffrey, Rory Love, Shellina Prendergast.
- 1.2 Lesley Game, Kelly Grehan, and Sarah Hamilton were present virtually.

2. Chairman's announcements

- 2.1 The Chair announced that three new Members had joined the Panel – Mr Bartlett (himself), Mr Brazier and Mrs Prendergast.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2024.

- 3.1 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2024 were a correct record of the meeting.

4. Participation Team update

- 4.1 Mr Thomas Byrne, Ms Kayleigh Leonard, Ms Jo Carpenter, and Mr Nathan Moody provided an update on the following:
 - Three new apprentices would be joining the Participation Team over the summer and two members of the team had completed, achieving distinctions, their Level 3 apprenticeship in Public Service Operational Delivery.
 - During the Easter school holidays meetings of the Super Council and OCYPC took place in Maidstone and Thanet and included alternative ways for young

people to participate. The young people spoke about their experiences in education and feedback was used by the national charity for Children in Care and Care Leavers to produce a film. Young people raised a number of points which included, for example, negative assumptions made by school staff and bullying. Suggestions were made to support children in care which included, for example, forming positive relationships with staff.

- The Young Adult Council met in the Easter holidays and discussed giving something back to the community. They subsequently helped out at the Maidstone Day Centre with cooking and serving food to vulnerable people.
- The Team met with the Adoptables Council and the Children WHO Care Council to look at three main areas including feeling safe in school, what makes school a nice place and how they are encouraged to be themselves in school.
- A range of activities took place over the Easter holidays including an Adoption Baking Day, a Children in Care activity day which included activities such as body zorbs, and an obstacle course at Betteshanger Park. An Easter Sensory event included nineteen young people and their wider families.
- The team has continued to present at University of Kent and Canterbury Christ Church University to share lived experiences and views to support their learning and understanding of what being in care means.
- A Participation Workshop took place in the Easter holidays at Whitstable Youth Hub to develop a short film called 'Listen Up'. This focused on the importance of hearing the voices of young people.
- Future events included the Kent Care Leavers Summer Event on 26 June 2024, a family picnic for adopted children and families on 6 July 2024 and the CPP Takeover Day on 30 July 2024.
- Full details for the CPP Takeover Day would be circulated.

5. Verbal Update by the Cabinet Member

5.1 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Update

As of 31 May there had been 201 arrivals for that month, 872 during the year so far, and 66 children awaiting dispersal through the National Transfer Scheme. Dispersals had been happening in increased numbers over the last couple of months but still not at the pace that was needed. The largest proportion of arrivals were currently from Afghanistan, followed by Iran and most children were 16 and over. Reception centres continued to be put in place across Kent and KCC continued to press government for the National Transfer Scheme to work better. There was a comprehensive FAQ section on the [KCC website](#) about Reception Centres for unaccompanied asylum seeing children.

5.2 Visit from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees visited Millbank Children's Accommodation Centre and subsequently wrote to Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director CYPE, to commend how well the centre was run and how the children were cared for.

5.3 Graduate Recruitment Scheme for Social Workers

A social worker graduate recruitment scheme had been completed and 49 offers had been made across Kent. The process may be carried out again later in the year.

6. Implementation of a Kinship Service based within Kent Fostering

6.1 Ms Caroline Smith introduced the report and summarised the new service for kinship, based within Kent Fostering, which would provide the assessment and support functions for all kinship arrangements for children. The service was launched on 1 April 2024.

6.2 The following points were noted during consideration of the item:

- The aim of the service was to build within communities, as a first choice for children coming into care, kinship arrangements within the family as opposed to main stream foster care placements. There was a shortage of foster carers nationally and in Kent.
- Dedicated support from a team of social workers and social worker assistants would be provided to kinship carers to give them reassurance they can care for children within their own family.
- A therapeutic support offer would also be provided to kinship carers and an Adoption and Special Guardianship Fund could be applied for.
- Support such as parenting courses could be accessed through family hubs.
- There were about 900 children in Kent, that KCC was aware of, with a special guardianship order. Some children may have arrived from outside Kent and Special Guardianship Orders could be made in private proceedings.
- Depending on the age and circumstances, the young person was involved in the decision-making process and the assessment focused on their needs and wishes.

6.3 The Panel agreed to note the report.

7. The Processes for children coming into the Country, Update on Ofsted Inspections of Children's Care Homes and UASC Reception Centres

7.1 Mr Kevin Kasaven introduced the report which provided an overview of the progress made to increase KCC's capacity to accommodate and look after all unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) arriving to Kent. Mr Kasaven said Ofsted had been invited to visit Millbank and Appledore Accommodation Centres and had indicated that there would be a positive registration for Appledore based on the current trajectory of improvements made to the site. Ofsted were offering to return to Millbank and Appledore in September and would review all the buildings under the same registration. Mr Kasaven said it was believed that the quality of age assessments was improving, and that it

was positive that court applications challenging age assessments had not been received for some time.

7.2 The following points were noted during consideration of the item:

- More information on individuals could be accessed and shared through other countries within the EU where checks had already been made.
- The NHS was working with KCC to create a pathway to allocate NHS numbers within the first 48 hours of individuals arriving to ensure information was received by the Child Protection Information Sharing Service (CP-IS).
- The names of the accommodation units were being changed to celebrate refugees and would be named after refugees who had settled in the UK and contributed to communities. The importance of communicating the name changes to local residents was noted. The names of accommodation units would be changed once the registration process had been completed with Ofsted.

7.3 The Panel agreed to note the report.