

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

3 NOVEMBER 2015

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

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Summary

This report provides a briefing to the Health and Well Being Board on the role and challenge function of Medway's Corporate Parenting Board, the key focus and achievements over the last 12 months, and the plans for the year ahead.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 Corporate Parenting is a high priority for government who have regulated the duties of Councils towards the children in its care through legislation and guidance. This has been reinforced through the Children Act 1989, Children Act 2004, the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and the Care Planning, Placement and Review Guidance 2011 and Care Leavers Regulations 2010.
- 1.2 Improving outcomes for Looked after Children features widely within the 'Council Plan'. Within the priority 'Children and young people have the best start in life in Medway' there are a number of key measures of success covering education and employment for care leavers, accommodation for care leavers, progress on adoption and educational outcomes for LAC.
- 1.3 The Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) does not hold a budget, although contributes in its scrutiny function towards achieving timely outcomes for children in care, including permanency arrangements, thereby reducing drift, delay and cost in the placements budget.

2. Background

- 2.1 This annual report to the Health & Wellbeing board provides the opportunity for review and challenge of the performance of CPB in relation to securing good outcomes for LAC. It also provides the opportunity for the HWB to consider the particular issues and needs of this group in relation to the JSNA priorities and its refresh.
- 2.2 Medway's CPB is chaired by the Lead Member for Children's Services, who has undertaken this function since May 2013.
- 2.3 Its core purpose as outlined in the Terms of Reference
- To ensure that Medway Council and its partner agencies effectively discharge their duties towards looked after young people and care leavers.
 - To ensure young people are supported, through a variety of methods, to communicate their needs, wishes and feelings about the care they receive to Elected Members.
 - To ensure that the Corporate Parenting Board is proactive in securing better outcomes for looked after children through appropriate challenge, engagement and discussion with Officers, partner agencies and other Elected Members.

3. Structure of the Board and how it carries out its work

- 3.1 The CPB meets on a quarterly basis, increased from twice yearly by the new Chair. During 2013, a number of sub-groups reporting into the Board were introduced to strengthen governance and drive forward actions operationally to improve outcomes for our Looked After Children (LAC).
- 3.2 The 4 sub-groups are Educational Attainment and NEET, Housing and Accommodation, Health, and Youth Justice. The sub-groups are chaired by a senior officer, multi-agency in nature, and meet as a minimum once between each CPB. The Chairs of the sub-groups are core members of the Board and have a standing item on progress made against actions at each meeting.
- 3.3 Since January 2014 representatives from the Children in Care Council (CiCC) attend every CPB meeting for a standing item to share their news and issues, as well as being supported to offer challenge and contribution to the work of the group.
- 3.4 The LMCS, DCS, AD, LAC Head of Service and Virtual Head Teacher attend the Children in Care Council meetings, which are led and chaired by the young people themselves.
- 3.5 The LMCS has received Corporate Parenting training provided by the LGA and was mentored by a peer LMCS. More recently, the DCS and AD for Children's Social Care provided Corporate Parenting training sessions for members in February and May 2015.

3.6 Core membership of the CPB includes;

- **LMCS Chair**
- Chair of Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, **Vice Chair**
- Elected Members as directed by the Cabinet Advisory Group
- Representatives from the Children in Care Council (Maximum 3)
- Assistant Director Children's Social Care
- Head of Service Looked After Children
- Principal Reviewing Officer
- Designated LAC Health Nurse
- Virtual Head Teacher
- Service Manager Youth Offending Team
- Assistant Director Partnership Commissioning

3.7 The CPB scrutinises a performance dashboard of data at each meeting in addition to the performance reports of each sub-group.

3.8 Recent inspection by Ofsted under the Single Inspection Framework in September and October 2015, commented in their provisional feedback that the CPB was an active advocate for and scrutiniser of children in care with good engagement with looked after children and care leavers, promoted by a strong Children in Care Council. The previous judgement of services to Looked After Children in 2013 was 'inadequate'.

4. **Board Achievements**

4.1 The challenge and scrutiny role of the board is predominantly focused on driving the overarching Looked after Children Strategy 2015-2018. This Strategy was revised in Jan 2015 including young peoples input from the Children in Care Council. It brings together actions and priorities, in the form of the LAC Strategy Action Plan, from the overall Children's Improvement Plan and recommendations from the August 2014-January 2015 Overview & Scrutiny Task and Finish Group focussing on improved outcomes for Care Leavers. The next scheduled review of this plan is in January 2016.

4.2 The LAC Strategy has 8 key objectives which drives the work of the sub groups reporting to the main board.

4.3 **Objective 1 - Provide timely and high quality intervention to help children remain with or return to their families, as long as it is safe to do so.**

4.4 Children's needs are best served in their own families where this can be safely supported. Helping families stay together is best supported by early identification of need with effective early intervention. Early intervention and prevention services can over time reduce the number of children and young people needing to become looked after.

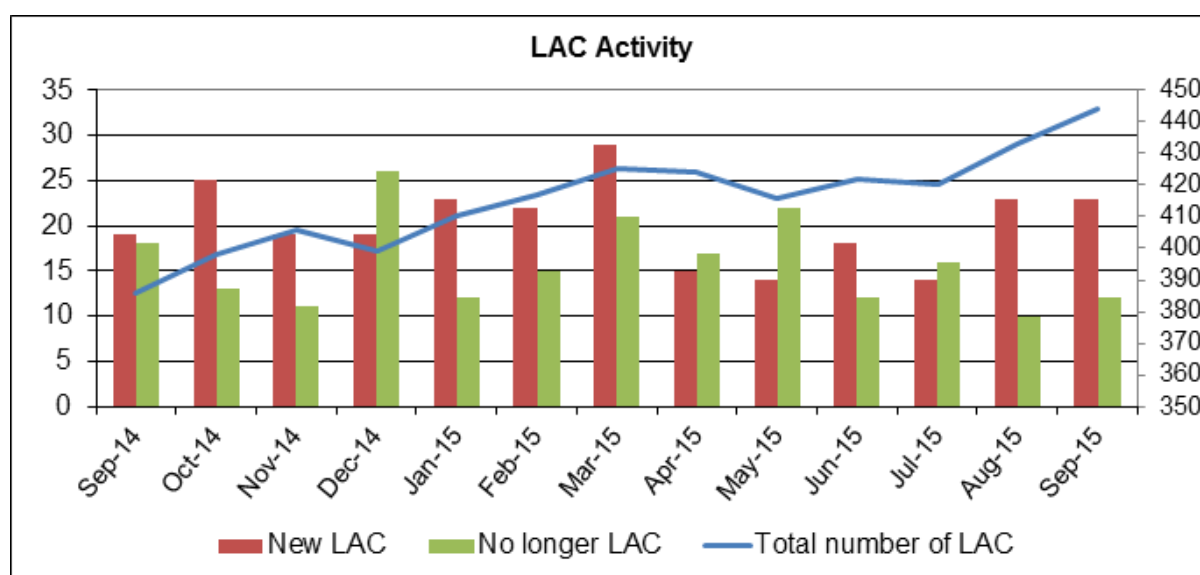
4.5 Success measures in this area include the extent to which Early Help has been mobilised and the volume, scale and quality of intervention undertaken with families. The graph below shows the number of Early Intervention Assessments (previously CAFs) carried out. In addition to our Intensive

Family Support Service, these will also be undertaken by Schools, Health Care Professionals, Voluntary agencies and the wider group of partners.

- 4.6 Additional capacity in the CAF Team from June saw the highest number on record recorded in that month, and whilst there was a dip in August primarily due to school holidays, high levels have again been reached for September.

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	YTD
News CAFs in 15/16	36	29	100	56	14	69	235

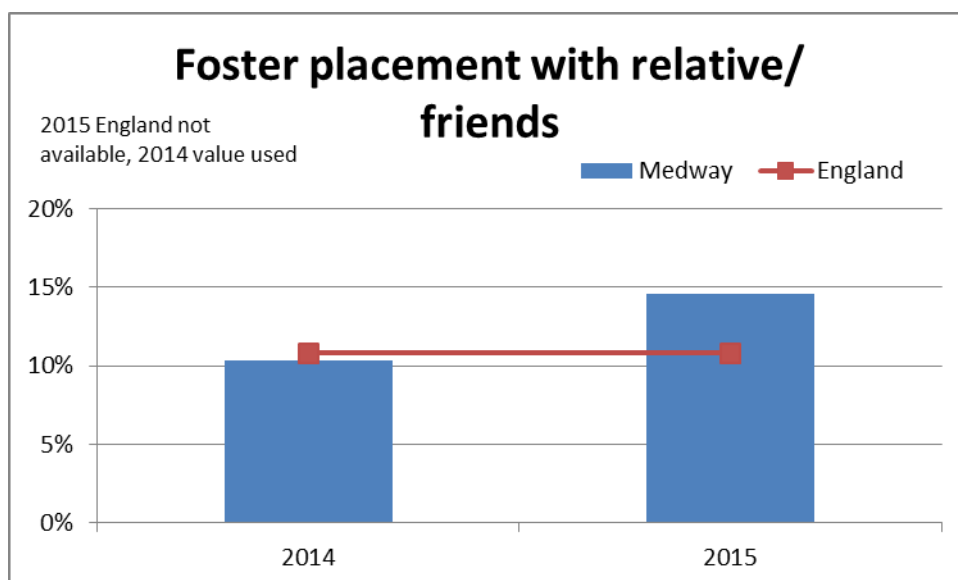
- 4.7 The below graph shows the overall numbers of looked after children. A number of measures are being put in place to address the rise in numbers of Looked After Children, including 'edge of care' initiatives to provide alternate ways to support young people in their families and prevent them coming into care.



- 4.8 The rise in numbers of Looked after Children also poses major financial and capacity challenges, the work to stabilise and reduce overall numbers forms an important part of the CPB scrutiny role. Extensive modelling and project work has been commissioned to ensure sufficient activity is taking place that supports stronger early intervention and diversion from care, and ensure all placements represent good value for money.

4.9 Objective 2 - Provide and commission the right mix of placements

- 4.10 The CPB need assure itself that Medway has the right range of placements to meet the assessed needs of our LAC as outlined in our LAC Strategy and Sufficiency Strategy.
- 4.11 More of our young people are placed with relatives, and we value these placements as a way of supporting young people to stay within their families and communities.



- 4.12 Attracting local people to become foster cares remains a key priority. Too many of our LAC are placed outside of Medway. Dedicated management capacity and project resources have been deployed to accelerate the recruitment and training of more local foster carers to provide placement's for Medway children.

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
LAC placed by Medway within another LAs boundary	159	168	160	162	180	175

- 4.13 **Objective 3 - Promote timely permanence planning for all children to ensure they have the opportunity of a stable, permanent home and long term relationships in a placement appropriate to their needs.**
- 4.14 Increased scrutiny is in place to ensure permanence for LAC through adoption or other orders/alternative arrangements.
- 4.15 The proportion of children adopted as a percentage of LAC numbers remains higher than national average (12.6% in 2014-5 compared to an England average of 5.4% and a SE region average of 8%). The result of this is a significant rise in the overall numbers of children adopted compared to Medway's historical performance in this area.

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(11/12)	(12/13)	(13/14)	(14/15)
16	26	43	48

- 4.16 The service remains highly ambitious to continue to address overall timescales for adoption, and has recently been successful in leading on a

transformative bid to the DfE around the 'regionalising adoption' agenda. New regional adoption arrangements will be in place in 16/17.

- 4.17 **Objective 4 - Ensure that looked after children and young people achieve their full potential and can access suitable education, employment or training.**
- 4.18 The Virtual School Head reports regularly to Corporate Parenting Board on educational progress made by children in care across their current key stage.
- 4.19 Progress in key stages 3 and 4 compares well with national expectations. The performance less strong at key stages 1 and 2 with one possible reason being that the majority of those in key stages 3 and 4 have been in care for a longer period, and that the benefits of stable care and the sustained ongoing support they receive from the Virtual School, including use of Pupil Premium, which has enabled their progress to accelerate.
- 4.20 As well as analysing the progress of year groups and key stages, the progress of individual children is tracked through the Virtual School and work of the sub-group, and additional support is provided for individual children as required to promote continued progress.
- 4.21 **Objective 5 - Improve the health and emotional well-being of looked after children and young people and care leavers**
- 4.22 The percentage of LAC who had their Initial Health Assessment within timescales in September 2015 was 81%, which is an improvement on the 2014-5 year end figure of 55%. This is attributed to increased capacity within the community paediatric service, including the appointment of a dedicated administrator to work alongside the LAC Health Team.
- 4.23 Ensuring access to CAMHS services for all of our LAC remains a challenge, but additional resources have been allocated by the CCG to improve provision at Tiers 2 and 3. A Single Point of Access has been established, and the contract with Sussex Partnership to provide the CAMHS service is being robustly managed, as well as range of good quality alternative mental health and emotional well-being services being accessed as an alternative.
- 4.24 **Objective 6 - Aim to keep looked after young people and care leavers safe through the provision of trained, supported and motivated staff who understand and are alert to the potential for exploitation and abuse of young people and who take the right action at the right time.**
- 4.25 New Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) templates and pro-forma (e.g. risk assessment, safety plans) have been rolled out to social work staff to support them in identifying and taking the appropriate action where looked after children and young are at risk of CSE.
- 4.26 External training has also been provided, and the co-location of the police and the social work teams affords better joint working and investigation. The

framework for risk management of CSE includes monthly reviews of missing children and escalation processes when they have concerns.

- 4.27 Governance and coordination of information sharing, corporately and across the partnership, is further strengthened through the establishment of the Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) Group and multi-agency co-located specialist CSE Investigation Unit.

4.28 **Objective 7 - Prepare young people for a successful transition to adulthood**

- 4.29 Provisional feedback from the recent Ofsted inspection noted a Care Leavers Service with strengths.

- 4.30 Ensuring care leavers have access to opportunities for employment and education remains challenging, and whilst Medway remains above the 15/16 target, and in line with national data, there has been a drop in performance from 14/15 figures.

Care Leavers in employment education or training on 19th, 20th or 21st birthday (Rolling 12 months for YTD figures)	National 13/14	Medway 13/14	Medway 14/15	Medway YTD	Medway target 15/16
	45.0%	44.0%	48.4%	40.0%	45.0%

- 4.31 A comprehensive action plan has been developed and is overseen by the CPB arising from the work of the Member Task Group on improving outcomes for care leavers, including employment, education and training opportunities.
- 4.32 A third care leaver is now working as an apprentice at Cookham Wood YOI, and the CPB in July 2015 was held at the unit.
- 4.33 A Leaving Care Nurse has been appointed to work specifically with young people leaving care and make sure they can readily access their health history.
- 4.34 A 'Your Future, Your Choice' booklet has been developed in conjunction with young people which outlines options around employment and training and a 'Steps To Success' event held recently for 16-18 year old LAC not in education, employment and training.
- 4.35 In respect to Care Leavers accessing suitable accommodation, again whilst this remains slightly above the last published national figures, performance has dropped compared performance in 14/15.

Care Leavers in suitable accommodation on 19th, 20th or 21st birthday (Rolling 12 months for year YTD figures)	National 13/14	Medway 13/14	Medway 14/15	Medway YTD	Medway target 15/16
	78.0%	78.0%	86.2%	79.0%	78.0%

- 4.36 The Leaving Care Team have worked closely with the Joint Commissioning Team and partners, to review accommodation provision for this group of young people and develop a commissioning strategy. A tendering process is underway to ensure a sufficiency and quality of supported accommodation for this cohort.
- 4.37 A number of our care leavers are unfortunately in custody which has an impact on both of the above performance indicators. Measures to address this include reviewing individual cases to examine reasons for their incarceration, assessing their accommodation needs prior to release, and addressing provision for care leaver with high needs, including their health needs.
- 4.38 The LMCS has been actively working with the police area commander around options for restorative justice as opposed to entering the justice system, and Medway are now signed up to the SE7 protocol to fully implement on the ground.
- 4.39 Care leavers currently in custody will be referred to a project to help them prepare for employment education & training (EET) opportunities upon their release.
- 4.40 A high number of young people who are deemed sick/disabled will undertake group work, with support from the health team and Job Centre Plus, to work towards EET opportunities.
- 4.41 More focus will also be placed on ensuring plans for EET are considered earlier in a child's life by their Social Worker.
- 4.42 **Objective 8 Ensure that looked after children and care leavers' views and experiences inform current and future service delivery**
- 4.43 Each CPB meeting is started with presentations (e.g. Stigma DVD, Trip to India) and updates on the wide range of activities and work undertaken by the Children in Care Council, and support from the Young Lives Foundation ensures that the young people contribute actively throughout, including decisions made.
- 4.44 Provisional verbal feedback from the Ofsted inspection noted that there was good engagement with LAC and the Children in Care Council.
- 4.45 More recently the CPB and the Chair have instigated a letter to all Councillors to ask what they have done for LAC over the last 12 months, and what they plan to do over the next, and through their work with the board, the CiCC representatives have now presented to Full Council and Cabinet meetings.

5. Risk management

- 5.1 The key issue facing CPB in its oversight and challenge function is the capacity and financial pressures posed by the increase in LAC population on all service areas supporting looked after children, and ensuring that as effective corporate parents, this does not hinder the care, support, aspirations or continued improvement in outcomes for our children in care.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 The HWB is asked to consider and comment on the annual report and the effectiveness of the Corporate Parenting Board.
- 8.2 The HWB is asked to note how the continued efforts of partners is helping to secure improved outcomes for Looked after Children, including coordination of the early help agenda to prevent unnecessary escalation of needs into the care system.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None