

Corporate Parenting Panel meeting Summary of meeting for care leavers

15/06/25

A Corporate Parenting Panel is a group of adults who work together to make sure children and young people in care and care leavers are safe, supported, and given the best chances in life.

People who might attend are people from the council (like councillors or social care leaders), health and education professionals and young people in care or care leavers are invited to share their views.

1. Adoption Report Summary (2024 to 25)

- **West Berkshire had mixed results**—some better, some worse than other areas.
- **Court delays** slowed early adoption placements.
- **Kinship care is strong** in the area.
- **More complex cases** like repeat removals and mother-baby placements were noted.
- **Adoption numbers rose** this year.
- **Staff shortages** caused paperwork delays, but improvements are underway.
- **Adoption is open** to all capable carers, regardless of age or disability.
- **Post-adoption contact rules** are under review due to possible legal changes.
- **Priority is on permanent homes** for under-fives over long-term foster care.
- **Support for older child adoption** is being encouraged.

2. Presentation on Local Offer by Child Voice (R Vue)

- West Berkshire Council has launched a new Leaving Care Offer webpage to help young people who are leaving care. It's now easier to use and has clear info about support and emergency contacts.
- Two care leavers Lailah and Noah helped design it, so it's more useful and friendly.
- The law says councils have to share this kind of info.

3. Helping Children in Care and Care Leavers

Karl Davis (service manager) gave a talk about how to make sure children in care and care leavers have stable, long-term homes.

Key Points:

- **Help Until 25:** Even though young people leave care at 18, they can still get support from a personal advisor until they're 25.
- **Adoption:** More children were adopted this year than usual (15). The council is keeping an eye on this trend.
- **Foster Care:** Things are going well, especially when children are placed with family members (this is called kinship care).



West Berkshire
C O U N C I L

- **Children's Homes:** Some children need extra support in residential homes. Two homes aren't officially approved yet, but they're working on fixing that.
- **Parent & Baby Homes:** Only two families are in special homes where parents are checked to see if they can safely care for their babies. More of these homes are needed.
- **Unapproved Homes:** Some homes aren't officially approved, but they're still being used because they're considered safe.
- **Long-Term Foster Care:** Not every child can be adopted, so some stay with foster families for a long time to give them a stable home.
- **Support for Relatives:** The government is giving money to help family members who take care of children.
- **Private Fostering:** Only one case was reported.
- **Understanding Autism & More:** Some placements don't work out because carers don't understand autism. More training and early help are needed.

4. Foster Carers Voice

Foster carers are organising a summer event and a Christmas party for the children they care for.

5. Berri Project

This project is trying to help some children move from residential homes (like group homes) into family homes with foster carers.

6. Corporate Parenting Strategy

A plan about how the council supports children in care has been updated and improved.

7. Care Leaver Annual Report

A new tool called Magic Note helps social workers write reports using AI (Artificial Intelligence). It's helpful, but people still need to double-check what it writes.

8. Performance Data

They talked about how well things are going for children in care.

There was a discussion about the words used—some systems say “**looked after children**”, but they prefer to say “**children in care**” because it sounds more respectful.

9. Any Other Business

- It was suggested that a care leaver who attends the R:Vue (the Children in Care Council) could find someone to write a letter or create a video for children in care informing them about R:Vue to promote it.
- Good news that there were eight fostering families in assessment. This was the result of the recent campaign, increased publicity and communication.
- A care experienced adult who is very good at art has designed a card for when a young person is offered a care assessment within the 12 month period. Currently a corporate style letter was sent out and the new card offered a more personal style.

If you are interested in attending a Corporate Parenting Panel meeting then please email Debbie Mitchell, at deborah.mitchell@westberks.gov.uk

