

Message from Sue Harrison,

Director of Children's Services



Hello,

It was a pleasure to meet some of you at our celebration event for young people, held in the council chambers. We had an amazing night, and gave 120 award certificates to young people who are achieving wonderful things whether they were very young or old enough to be leaving care. Our young people who are reaching independence are great role models for the younger ones, who can see what can be achieved if they work hard and make the right choices. We celebrated a young man who is studying at university, and a young man who has started an apprenticeship with Ringway Jacobs; both are loving life and despite having had their challenges on the way, they are making their way in the world successfully and we are very proud of them. One of our young people wrote a letter to his social worker to thank him for the support he received, saying how much he is enjoying college and his part time job, things which his social worker has encouraged him to do, 'you have really helped me to turn my life around, thank you for all your support,' he wrote.



Pictured above left to right, Gerard Jones, Helen Redding, Sue Harrison, Karen Oellermann and Sandra Eimon.

We celebrated the work that Children's Services officers do at our very first Staff Awards evening, also held in the council chamber. This was also an amazing night, where staff had nominated each other for their achievements and Cllr Hegley, our Lead member for Children's Services, presented a special Children in Care Council award which went to Marie who many of you know. This came as a total surprise to Marie who, though she was there to support young people, she had no idea she would be presented with an award! Well done Marie and all our worthy winners!

As you know I enjoy getting out and about, I was fortunate in spending an afternoon with one of our health visitors recently. We visited two mums and babies at home and they both really appreciated the good advice and support from Tracey, their health visitor. We took weighing scales with us on the visits to weigh the babies, and book packs which will help to encourage our children to read from an early age.

I spent a morning at St Mary's Lower school in Caddington, where the children were working hard. Some were busy enjoying their maths lessons and some were writing about the First World War. I was impressed to see how children were able to write in the character of a first world war soldier, and describe what life in the trenches must have been like.

I have been speaking with lots of head teachers as we met up in local clusters to discuss how we can all work together to ensure that all our children make great progress at school and leave with the best outcomes. Each cluster – there are 9 of them, has elected a Chair who will represent their cluster in a number of discussions ranging from how we can best support children and their families in Children's Services locality teams, to how we can celebrate and share good teaching practice across Central Bedfordshire.

On a personal note we have a new addition to our family – Adrian is quite a big dog, a black and white lurcher who is very good natured and has settled in well with the other animals. I am enjoying taking him and Flo for walks and I'm hoping his good behaviour will rub off on Flo who you may remember is a mischievous little character! I'm looking forwards to spending some time with my human family over the Christmas holidays which are fast approaching. I hope you all have a good break and enjoy the festivities. I will see some of you at the Care Leavers' Christmas party; I'm really looking forwards to popping in. I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Sue