

## **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Committee**  
held on Wednesday, 9th May, 2018 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,  
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

### **PRESENT**

Councillor G Merry (Chairman)  
Councillor D Flude (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors P Butterill, M Deakin, B Dooley, L Durham, S Edgar (for Cllr O Hunter), S Gardiner, M Grant, A Kolker and M Warren

### **Councillor in attendance**

Councillor J Saunders, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

### **Officers in attendance**

Gill Betton, Head of Service: Children's Development and Partnerships  
Kerry Birtles, Head of Service: Cared for Children & Care Leavers  
Diane Grist, Service Manager Fostering and SGO Support  
Nigel Moorhouse, Director of Children's Social Care  
Steve Nevitt, Group Manager Resources  
Julie Zientek, Democratic Services Officer

### **48 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Smetham (due to Council business) and O Hunter.

### **49 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **50 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2018 be approved as a correct record.

### **51 INPUT FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Head of Cared for Children and Care Leavers reported that there was no formal update as no young people had attended a meeting the previous week. The 'pen pictures' of Corporate Parenting Committee members would be shared with young people later in the week.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

## 52 STAFFING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Committee considered the Children's Social Care Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2018 - 2020.

In addition to the information contained in the report and in response to questions from Committee members, officers stated the following:

- Signs of Safety, which had been adopted as the operational model in November 2017, had been very good for recruitment and retention.
- Caseloads were calculated on the basis of the number of individual cases and not per family unit.
- The Council's legal teams had the capacity to support social workers.
- No one case management system was the best, but Liquid Logic offered a good balance between records and practice.
- Following criticism of an agency social worker in a court judgement in March 2017, systems had been reviewed and practice strengthened.
- Staff feedback, including exit interviews, was reported to the Staffing Committee.
- Recruitment payments only applied to Crewe, as it was more difficult to recruit to Crewe than Macclesfield.
- There were strong links with local universities, a lot of work had been done on the ASYE programme for newly qualified social workers, more student placements were being offered than previously, and students in partner universities were offered a route into Cheshire East, based in Crewe.
- Some recently-recruited staff did not have English as their first language. This reflected the areas in which they worked.
- Quite a few enquires were received from people looking for a career change, and Cheshire East was to start offering the one year conversion programme 'Step Up to Social Work'.

The Director of Children's Social Care presented Quarter 3 staffing data and highlighted key points.

- The Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS) was fully staffed.
- The Children in Need and Child Protection Team – Macclesfield had no agency staff, although they were occasionally used to cover maternity leave.

- The Children in Need and Child Protection Team – Crewe had a number of agency staff and some vacancies. There were more vacancies in Quarter 4, and more family support workers were being used to support social workers. Some staff had recently been assaulted and personal safety training was being offered.
- Permanence and Through Care had recently had some staff turnover and there were some vacancies.
- Vacancies in the Fostering Team had been filled by internal moves and external recruitment.
- Independent Safeguarding Chairs were fully staffed in December, which was very positive.
- The Vacancy Rate was 7.3% in December 2017.
- The desirable ratio of experienced to newly qualified staff had not yet been achieved.
- The rate of Staff Turnover was 18.2%, which was higher than desired.
- Staff Sickness was quite low.

In addition to the information contained in the presentation and in response to questions from Committee members, officers stated the following:

- There was a higher than normal number of family support worker vacancies as it was a non statutory role which enabled people to gain experience before deciding what to do.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

### 53 **CORPORATE PARENTING SCORECARD Q3**

The Committee considered the scorecard for the third quarter of 2017/18, which covered the following six measures of performance:

- General
- Involve Me
- Provide Me With a Good Safe Home
- Keep Me Healthy
- Help Me Achieve
- Support Me to Move into Adult Life

The scorecard compared the current quarter with the two previous quarters and year end and indicated the quarterly direction of travel.

The Head of Cared for Children and Care Leavers highlighted the following key points:

- The population of cared for children had increased slightly with respect to quarter 2, but the rate of increase was slowing down. This was due to fewer admissions and children not remaining in care longer than necessary.
- The position with regard to initial health assessments had considerably improved.
- There had been real improvements in care leavers accessing education, employment and training.

In addition to the information contained in the report and in response to questions from Committee members, officers stated the following:

- A small number of care leavers accessed Higher Education. Independence plans and ambitious foster carers encouraged them to be the best they can be. The Council was a guarantor of accommodation, so they could return to their foster carers during the vacations if they wished.
- The number of pregnant care leavers may increase, as a result of reforms which identified a larger cohort.

RESOLVED – That the content be noted.

#### **54 CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE**

The Committee received an update on national and local developments in relation to cared for children and young people and care leavers.

A resume of the following national developments was given:

- Extended Personal Adviser duty Implementation Grant (New Burdens)
- DfE commissioned foster care review

Local developments included:

- Update on Development of the Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Local Area SEND Inspection
- Approval for new special school in Crewe
- Voice for Children Contract
- Re-commission of supported lodgings

- Cared for Children and Care Leavers Service
- Family Nurse Partnership
- Changes to Pupil Premium Plus
- School places for children looked after by other local authorities
- Participation with Children and Young People
- Cheshire East Care Leavers Facebook Account
- Independent Visitors Needed

With respect to the Corporate Parenting Strategy, the Head of Cared for Children and Care Leavers outlined the proposed Member training and induction, as follows:

- A booklet was being produced.
- All new members were to receive a short induction session on corporate parenting.
- There would be 2 training sessions per year (July and January). This would be mandatory for Corporate Parenting Committee Members and encouraged for all Members.
- The training would cover:  
Corporate parenting responsibilities  
Experiences of cared for children and care leavers  
Profile and outcomes of children  
Participation of children and young people  
Support to care leavers
- Following training, a rota of frontline visits would be produced annually. Visits would include the care leavers service and residential care.

In response to a question from a Committee member, it was confirmed that DBS checks were not portable.

With respect to the Local Area SEND Inspection, it was reported that the Inspectors' letter had been received and that the contents would be disseminated the following day.

## RESOLVED

1. That the updates be noted.
2. That a plan regarding the publication of the 'pen pictures' of Corporate Parenting Committee members and other information on the Cheshire East Care Leavers Facebook Account be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.
3. That it be noted that work is continuing on the recruitment of additional Independent Visitors.

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and concluded at 5.15 pm  
Councillor G Merry (Chairman)

