

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting:	26 July 2011
Report of:	Lorraine Butcher, Director of Children's Services
Subject/Title:	Annual report on Cared For Children in Cheshire East
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Hilda Gaddum

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 In order for the aspirations and expectations for Children in our Care and Care Leavers to be realised, it is important that Scrutiny Committee and the Board responsible for achieving them receives regular reports that set out the progress and obstacles against the agreed outcome that Cheshire East is making every day better for our children and young people. The annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) report is part of that process. As a national requirement, it's primary purpose is set out in the Independent Reviewing Officer's Handbook (section 7.2)
- 1.2 There has been an IRO service for Cared for Children for a number of years, but following a national review of the role, central government produced The IRO Handbook and gave it statutory status. This was fully implemented in April 2011 as part of changes to Children and Young Persons Act 2008. The principles of the new regulations require:
 - a. Increase scrutiny and oversight of the child's care plan
 - b. Increase participation of children and young people and their families
 - c. Securing greater stability for children
 - d. Care plans must be able to meet court requirements
 - e. Clear processes of assessment, care planning, intervention and review to improve experience and outcomes for cared for children.
- 1.3 The report provides an overview of the national context and local picture including the outcomes of cared for children and the performance of the conference and review team. It includes case studies in order to demonstrate experiences of Cheshire East cared for population and care leavers. It also sets out the policy which will be shared with service users which includes how the service might remove barriers to ensure better outcomes for children.

- 1.4 The requirement of Scrutiny committee and ultimately the Corporate Parenting Board is to challenge and scrutinise this report and move to consider and agree the recommendations and actions required.

2.0 Decision Requested

- 2.1 To note the contents of the report
- 2.2 To support the recommendations and priorities set out within it
- 2.3 To agree its presentation to Corporate Parenting Board

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 As set out within the report

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 Potentially all wards and all Council as Corporate parents

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 Corporate Parents

6.0 Policy Implications including - Carbon reduction - Health

- 6.1 N/A

7.0 Financial Implications (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

- 7.1 N/A – although there is a consideration in respect of independent legal advice that would have financial implications for the Council if required

8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

- 8.1 One of the decisions relates to the requirement for the provision of independent legal advice. This is referenced in the full report attached.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 The provision of services to the cared for children and young people of Cheshire East form a key element of the statutory responsibilities for the Council. The risks in failing to meet these responsibilities in an appropriate and timely way are high both in relation to the impact on the outcome for individual children and young people but also in relation to the performance of the Council as a whole. The management of those risks is dependent upon a commitment not only within and across the Council but across the partnership agencies too. The report sets out in a limited way the current position in relation to that provision and some of the priority challenges in continuing to improve the outcomes for the cared for population.

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 These are contained in the attached Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report 2010/11.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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