

Appendix 1

Response to Fostering Task & Finish Recommendations

Recommendations	Response	Proposed	Lead & timescale	Risk Factors
<p>3.7 That all staff involved in the Fostering & Adoption service are situated on a single site, where appropriate.</p>	<p>Agreed in Principle</p> <p>However it is important to ensure that some operational services are best placed within dedicated areas.</p>	<p>Current plans are in place to relocate adoption and care planning services this will include the Cared for Support Service at the former Cledford Primary school in Middlewich. In addition Independent Safeguarding Chairs will also have a dedicated area within the site, which will also provide conference facilities to enable Child Protection Conferences, Adoption and Fostering Panels to take place.</p> <p>The two fostering teams however will remain within their current base of Macclesfield Town Hall and Delamere House.</p>	<p>Head of Service for Social Care.</p> <p>Target date June 2012</p>	
<p>3.8 That in line with the corporate parenting strategy, all corporate policies must consider their impact on cared for children.</p>	<p>Agreed in Principle</p>	<p>It is proposed that this recommendation is managed through the Corporate Parenting Board membership, which has been recently refreshed with new members enabling wider council representation.</p>	<p>Monitored by Corporate Parenting Board members through their bi monthly meetings</p>	<p>Cared for Children may not achieve their full potential.</p>

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3.9 That consideration be given to a renewed focus on recruitment and assessment of mainstream foster carers in order to ensure that Cheshire East Council meets its sufficiency requirements.	Agreed in Principle. There is a commitment within Children's and Families to develop a wide and varied range of foster homes including short break carers and specialist carers for hard to place teenagers who are on the edge of criminality	Recent events has seen Cheshire East be part of the regional recruitment campaign, alongside the authorities own recruitment drive all of which continues to attract high numbers of adults interested in fostering.	Principal Manager Cared for Children Service Through agreed recruitment strategy for 2012/13	
3.10 That Cheshire East continues to provide support and resources for the recruitment of foster carers.	Agreed in Principle However in light of the current financial climate and recruitment freeze there remains a real risk of this not being achieved	Proposal is to continue to recruit to current vacancies	Head of Service – Social Care & Principal Manager for Cared for Children Service	
3.11 That the process from initial expression of interest to approval by panel be given a speedy, yet achievable timescale from which clear milestones are communicated to both prospective carers and staff throughout the development of the application.	Agreed in Principle	Proposal is to continue to work where possible to realistic timescales. However, due to the difficulties in recruitment to current vacancies the decision has been made in the interim to use experience independent sessional workers who will be paid on performance and results	Principal Manager Cared for children	Vacancy management has slowed the recruitment of social workers to undertake assessments which in turn has not achieved the desired improvement in timescales
3.12 That prospective carers moving through the application process be paired with an experienced carer as a mentor.	Agreed in Principle	Fostering Service are currently exploring this and will develop further throughout 2012	Principal Manager Cared for Children Group Manager Fostering	Unable to Identify a workable process for this to be achieved.

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3.13 That an investigation be carried out to assess the viability of creating a budget to enable Cheshire East to pay commercial mortgage rates for home modifications in order to allow prospective carers take on their first or additional placements.	Agreed in Principle	Budget for this financial year was secured with great success and a policy is currently under development. However, this recommendation requires further exploration as to the affordability for the council over the coming years.	Director of Children, Families & Adults	Unable to Identify monies for future years
3.14 That the information from placement request forms in terms of demand in particular placements be made available to the recruitment officer to inform the marketing strategy.	Agreed in Principle	Ongoing developments within the placement service has resulted in this recommendation already being achieved and informing targeted marketing	This will continue to be monitored by the Head of Service – Social Care and Principal Manager Cared for Children	Demand outstrips need resulting in cared for children needs not being met
3.15 That 'disruption meetings' along the lines of the Stoke-on-Trent model be held with foster placements that have been identified as being at risk of disruption.	Agreed in Principle	This will progress following the successful appointment of an Independent Safeguarding chair	Principal Manager Cared for Children & Group Manager Fostering. Plan will be to Further develop process within 2012	Unable to progress due to not being able to fill vacancy in 2012
3.16 That experienced foster carers be used in delivering training sessions or workshops to make best use of their professional skills.	Agreed in Principle	Currently exploring how a foster carer who is an ex ICT lecturer can assist in skilling up others who are not computer literate. Proposal will be to roll out and expand in 2012	Group Manager Fostering Plan will be to Further develop a process within 2012	

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3.17 That a budget be made available for the service to either purchase a small library of publications from the Safer Foster Carer Network for the use of foster carers or to explore web-based training opportunities.	Agreed in Principle	This recommendation is being considered alongside the overall training programme for foster carers. However, this recommendation requires further exploration as to the affordability for the council over the coming years.	Head of Service and Principal Manager Cared for Children	
3.18 That training is provided for the safe handling of Children in Care.	Agreed in Principle	This is included in the overall training programme for foster carers. Bespoke training for foster carers in relation to management of challenging behaviour has also been commissioned in collaboration with the Workforce Development Team.	Principal Manager Cared for Children alongside Workforce Development team	
3.19 That financial support be maintained for carers attending training events	Agreed in Principle	Currently being maintained.	Head of Service Social Care	Current Financial Climate may result in this financial support not being sustained
3.20 That support and resources for the Cared for Children's Support Team be maintained.	Agreed in Principle	Currently being maintained	Head of Service Social Care	

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3.21 That the possibility of making links with Cheshire East Leisure Facilities under the auspices of the Corporate Parenting Strategy be investigated to provide respite breaks using the same principles of the Dream wall project. Within this, that the possibility of reciprocal relationships with adjacent authorities be explored in terms of respite facilities – particularly for Cheshire East children placed out-of-Borough.	Agreed in Principle	The Fostering service is currently exploring opportunities with Tatton Park and the scouting association in relation to providing foster families with respite breaks.	Group Manager Fostering will continue to explore and progress during 2012	
3.22 That Cheshire East formalises the on-going support that foster carers provide for themselves in partnership with appropriate fostering networks.	Agreed in Principle	Support groups are being established. To be launched in the new year.	Group Manager Fostering will continue to develop during 2012	
3.23 That the possibility of links being made with the family support service to assist with out-of-hours support for foster carers be investigated. In addition, that the service explore the possibility of commissioning an out-of-hours support line.	Agreed in Principle	Out of hours support currently under development. However, analysis of the use of the current provision is needed to help inform future planning	Principal Manager Cared for Children Service & Principal Manager Early Intervention and Prevention Service	

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3.24 That the awards night be continued, currently undertaken by the Cheshire Foster Carer Association, to recognise the achievements of our Children in Care and the contributions of our foster carers.	Agreed in Principle	Awards night continues however, this now sits as corporate council event. Planning for 2012 event has begun. Aim of the Awards event is to recognise the achievements of all Cheshire East cared for children and their carers including staff within residential settings, kinship carers as well as foster carers	Corporate Parenting Board & Awards Steering Group	
3.25 That foster carers be provided with the contact details of their local Councillors.	Agreed in Principle	This information is to be provided following Corporate Parenting Training to Councillors in Feb 2012	Principal Manager Cared for children	Risk that information is not kept up to date
3.26 That a 'starter pack' be produced for each new placement which provides the requisite information about the child/young person with a small, flexible budget.	Agreed in Principle	Currently exploring how this can be best achieved, this will be further progressed in 2012.	Principal Manager Cared for children	Current financial climate may impact on achieving fully this recommendation
3.27 That support and resources for the Virtual School be maintained including the Personal Educational Allowance, Education Support Fund and Educational Psychologists.	Agreed in Principle	PEA and ESF no longer exist. This has been replaced with one fund called Virtual School Support Fund. This fund is managed by the Head of the Virtual School on a needs led basis.	Head of Virtual School	

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3.28 That a comprehensive register of the appropriateness of out-of-borough educational settings is compiled with a rigorous quality assurance programme put in place to monitor it.	Agreed in Principle	Collaboratively working with other local Virtual School teams	Head of Virtual School	
3.29 That the Virtual School provides training to teachers so that they provide an appropriate level of support for Cared for Children and assist in any transitional processes between settings.	Agreed in Principle	Termly training to Designated Teachers is ongoing as well as direct training to individual schools and a comprehensive programme of training for Foster Carers on the world of education.	Head of Virtual School will continue to monitor and evaluate	
3.30 That a Task and Finish Review be established to examine the processes, systems and staffing issues around health and Cared for Children.	Agreed in Principle	Task and Finish group currently undertaking this. Propose a respond to recommendations once completed	Head of Service Social Care , Principal Manager Cared for Children & Health Colleagues	
3.31 That a new electronic recording system be purchased to ensure seamless information sharing between children's and adult's services.	Agreed in Principle	Complete roadmap is underway to establish the full requirements of a new system to inform a tender process, and a bid for Capital Funding has been completed. Pending this continue to work with the existing system developing information contained within and ensuring that it meets the needs of the service	Director of Children, Families and Adults	Current financial climate may impact on achieving fully this recommendation

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3.32 That links are made with Registered Social Landlords to secure decent housing for care leavers, particularly in the Macclesfield area.	Agreed in Principle	16 plus group currently exploring options for this. Recommendations will be made once group has completed task	Principal Manager Cared for Children & Corporate Housing Colleagues	
3.33 That a fit-for-purpose facility be procured so to curtail the practice of 'sofa-surfing' and to assist in the training of young people as they prepare for independence.	Agreed in Principle	The successful relocation of the 16 plus service to enable practical training of young people towards independence is key to this recommendation being achieved. This together with 3.32 recommendation of ensuring priority & affordable housing for cared for children occurs thereby avoiding the need for young people to sofa surf	Corporate Assets, Corporate Housing Colleagues. Principal Manager Cared for Children	
3.34 That Cheshire East pays a retainer to Foster Carers for keeping open a placement for a young person at university.	Agreed in Principle	Currently the service is revising the financial policy in respect of this recommendation. However, the question of affordability given the current financial climate, together with the shortage of in house foster carers may result in this not being achieved	Head of Service Social Care	

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3.35 That strong performance monitoring systems be put in place and embedded throughout the fostering service.	Agreed in Principle	Figures for recruitment, approval and deregistration collected as routine. Also referrals for Family Finding and Family and Friends Carers. However this continues to still be under development in terms of reporting systems.	Head of Service Social Care & Principal Manager Cared for Children	
3.36 That exit interviews be conducted on all foster carers who resign from the service and the resulting information be analysed for trends.	Agreed in Principle	To be implemented once staffing secured.	Principal Manager Cared for Children	
3.37 That links are made, whenever possible, with the early intervention agenda – particularly with the Sure Start programme.	Agreed in Principle	Currently analysing the take up of the free nursery places to ensure all foster carers are accessing for our Cared for children.	Principal Manager Cared for Children & Principal Manager Early Intervention and Prevention	
3.38 That Cheshire East's payment rates be constantly tracked against and compared to our geographical and statistical neighbours	Agreed in Principle	Recently revised pay rates to match Fostering network recommended rates. New payment rates agreed for 2011-2012 in October. Cheshire East is part of the North West Regional Looked After Children Group, who provides essential regional information. Further work is being developed around geographical and statistical neighbours.	Head of Service Social Care & Principal Manager Cared for Children	

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3.39 That a business case be commissioned which investigates the benefit cost ratio of investing in fostering services to reduce dependency on residential placements and IFAs.	<p>Agreed in Principle.</p> <p>Residential placements can and do offer a valuable resource to some young people who cannot manage a foster home environment.</p> <p>Therefore the need to ensure a mix economy of provision is essential to ensure children/young peoples needs are being appropriately met</p>	Work will be undertaken in the new year alongside a commissioning strategy for Cared for Children in developing a mixed economy of provision within the authority	Head of Service Social Care, Principal Manager Cared for Children & Colleagues from commissioning services	
3.40 That a Task and Finish Review be established to examine the 16 plus service for cared for children.	Agreed in Principle	16 plus group established to report to SLT in April 2012.		