

# Corporate Parenting Committee

## Agenda

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**Date:** Tuesday, 17th September, 2019  
**Time:** 4.00 pm  
**Venue:** Committee Suite 1, 2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road,  
Sandbach CW11 1HZ

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The agenda is divided into 2 parts. Part 1 is taken in the presence of the public and press. Part 2 items will be considered in the absence of the public and press for the reasons indicated on the agenda and in the report.

### **PART 1 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT**

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any disclosable pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in any item on the agenda.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 3 - 8)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2019.

4. **Corporate Parenting Update from Elected Members**

To receive a verbal update from members of the Committee.

5. **Update from Children and Young People**

To receive an update from children and young people.

6. **Fostering Panel Annual Report** (Pages 9 - 26)

To consider the Fostering Panel Annual Report for 2018-19 and to receive a presentation.

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7. **Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Report 2018-19** (Pages 27 - 42)

To consider the Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Report for 2018-19.

8. **Corporate Parenting Update and Scorecard** (Pages 43 - 52)

To consider the update report and scorecard.

9. **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

To consider passing a resolution under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public and press from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 2, pursuant to part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the Act.

**PART 2 - MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITHOUT THE PRESS AND PUBLIC PRESENT**

10. **Children's Rights Annual Report** (Pages 53 - 66)

To consider the Cheshire East Children's Rights Service Annual Report for 2018.

11. **Focus Report on Permanency and Keeping Children Safe (Pledge Three)**  
(Pages 67 - 74)

To consider the above report.

**CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Committee**  
held on Tuesday, 18th June, 2019 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,  
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

**PRESENT**

Councillor D Flude (Chairman)  
Councillor J Saunders (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors J Barber, J Buckley, C Bulman, P Butterill, S Edgar, K Flavell and  
M Warren

**Officers in attendance**

Gill Betton, Head of Service: Children's Development and Partnerships  
Keith Martin, Head of Service: Cared for Children & Care Leavers  
Laura Rogerson, Headteacher, Virtual School for Cared for Children  
Jacquie Sims, Director of Children's Social Care  
Ruth Tucker, Deputy Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children  
Kayleigh Wilshaw, Service Manager: Cared for Children and Care Leavers  
Julie Zientek, Democratic Services Officer

**1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED – That Councillor D Flude be appointed Chairman of the  
Committee for the Municipal Year 2019/20.

*Councillor Flude took the Chair.*

**2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED – That Councillor J Saunders be appointed Vice-Chairman of  
the Committee for the Municipal Year 2019/20.

**3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Bailey and M  
Beanland.

**4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2019 be  
approved as a correct record.

**6 CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE FROM ELECTED MEMBERS**

This was a standing item on the agenda, giving Members an opportunity to update other Members of the committee.

The next meeting would include a training session for Corporate Parenting Committee Members which would cover how Members could link to young people and the workstreams.

**7 INPUT FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Acting Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers reported back from his regular meeting with the Chairman and the Shadow Committee of young people which took place a week prior to meetings of the Corporate Parenting Committee to give the committee a direct link with young people in care. Updates were given, including the work the Shadow Committee had done around shaping the direction of residential provision in Cheshire East.

**8 RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

The Committee received the above report, which summarised recent recruitment activity and outlined a range of proposals to improve social worker retention.

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

- There was a flexible working policy. Social workers could hot desk and work at home.
- Salaries for social workers were being kept under review.
- There was a regular social work survey, which included what it was like to be a social worker in Cheshire East. Issues raised could be shared with the portfolio holder and a decision made regarding the relevant forum for further discussion.
- With regard to social worker caseloads, cases were allocated to managers but students were working them. Data regarding caseloads would be clearer in future. Workloads were slowly reducing and it was intended to reduce them further.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

**9 THE HEALTH OF CARED FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
INTERIM REPORT: OCT 2018 - MARCH 2019**

The Committee received the above report, which outlined the delivery of NHS health services to children in the care of Cheshire East Council

during the period 1 October 2018 to 31 March 2019. The report reviewed performance indicators, clinical work undertaken by the Wirral Community NHS Trust Cared for Children Health Team, service improvements and plans for further development.

Members requested clarification of the figures in Tables 2 and 3 (Review Health Assessments completed within due month), to be provided at a future meeting.

Members asked a number of questions and received confirmation that:

- There was communication via social media and an app was being developed.
- Review Health Assessments included information on visits to the dentist.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

### 10 **STRENGTHS AND DIFFICULTIES QUESTIONNAIRE AND SCORES IN CHESHIRE EAST**

Following a request at a previous meeting for further information regarding the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), Members received a presentation on the Use of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire with Cared for Children in Cheshire East.

The SDQ was a tool for screening emotional and behavioural problems in children and young people between the ages of 3 and 17. It was used by trained practitioners, was administered annually and ensured that young people were directed to the right support.

It was recognised that the SDQ had limitations, and future plans included development of the tool for the benefit of young people.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

### 11 **CHILDREN'S HOMES MOBILISATION UPDATE**

The Committee received the above report, which outlined the procurement process and provided an update on the mobilisation of the children's homes commission since contracts had been awarded.

In response to a question from the Chairman, it was reported that visits to children's homes by Corporate Parenting Committee Members would be confirmed at the training session.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

**12 CLAREMONT HOUSE OFSTED REPORT**

The Committee considered a report of an Ofsted inspection of Claremont House which had taken place in April 2019. The inspection judgement had been good, and a letter had been sent to the children's home to congratulate them.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

**13 REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee considered the Terms of Reference for the Committee.

Suggestions for amendments included replacing 'Children's Improvement Plan' with 'Children's and Young People Plan', including the Independent Review Officers' Annual Report in the list of annual reports scrutinised by the Committee, and clarifying that the Committee reports to the Council's Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – That an amended version of the Terms of Reference be attached to the Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2018/19 for consideration by the Committee at its next meeting, prior to endorsement by Cabinet.

**14 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

RESOLVED - That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items pursuant to Section 100(A) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

**15 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 was given:

- Star Celebrations update
- TOGETHER co production
- TACT: Language that Cares
- Member training update
- Investing in Children Award
- New Children and Young People's Plan 2019-21
- Cared for Children's Achievements
- Department of Education Letter re Adoption in Cheshire East
- Care Hubs (Bespoke) Project update

- Section 31 grant determination letters
- Distress signals
- Ofsted's new inspection framework for schools

RESOLVED - That the update be noted.

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and concluded at 5.45 pm

Councillor D Flude (Chairman)

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**CHESHIRE EAST FOSTERING PANEL ANNUAL REPORT****1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2018 – 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2019****INTRODUCTION**

1. Although there is no statutory or regulatory requirement for an annual report of the Fostering Panel to be produced, such a report has been produced since 2011 in respect of the work of the Cheshire East Fostering Panel. Included in the reports is the chair's quality assurance report to the agency.

**THE PANEL****Panel role**

2. In addition to the functions listed in Regulation 25 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, the Cheshire East fostering panel considers and makes recommendations concerning proposed permanent matches of cared for children with foster carers.

**Meetings and venue**

3. Meetings are held in Cledford House, Middlewich, which has good meeting room and waiting facilities. The proximity of the fostering and some children's social work services is helpful. Social workers and foster carers attending panel report favourably on the venue.
4. The panel usually meets every three weeks, with the calendar being produced well in advance. 17 meetings were scheduled for the review year, but it was necessary to convene three extra panel meetings towards the end of 2018, due to the high number of cases being referred to the panel.

**Service Advisor to the panel**

5. The role of the Service Advisor is essential to the effective running of the panel. Throughout the review year, panel has continued to have the benefit of the consistent support of Gary Pickles, who brings substantial experience of practice in other fostering and adoption panels. He provides the panel with advice on law, regulation and practice and gate keeps reports to be presented, referring deficits and queries back to the authors and/or responsible managers.

**Panel administrator**

6. The panel administrator is Marion Mordecai. Her responsibilities include planning the calendar of panel meetings; managing the agenda (in consultation with the Service Advisor); ensuring that meetings are quorate; distributing the panel papers to the panel members; preparing the meeting and waiting rooms; minuting the meetings and distributing the minutes for approval. The administrator also keeps the central list members' records and collects data relating to panel activity.

**Receipt of panel papers**

7. The receipt of Panel papers is timely, with members usually receiving them a full week before the meeting. They are circulated on encrypted SD cards; the agency provides central list members with electronic tablets on which the cards can be read. The wifi function of these tablets is disabled. This system was introduced in 2012 and the tablets provided are now outdated and not easy to use.

**Central List Membership**

8. The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 require the agency to maintain a “central list” of potential panel members with a range of relevant skills, knowledge and experience, from which the membership of any panel meeting can be drawn. The agency is also required to appoint an independent person to chair the panel.
9. The quorum for panel business is a minimum of 5 central list members, to include:
  - The chair or vice chair;
  - A social worker with at least 3 years relevant post-qualifying experience;
  - 3 other members, of which, in the absence of the independent chair, at least one must be independent of the agency.

Unlike adoption panels, there is no requirement for the Service Advisor to be present at the meeting.

10. It is recognised that the Cheshire East Fostering Panel central list lacks diversity and gender balance and every effort is made to address this in recruitment. The membership of the central list during 2017/18 was:

Shelley Lewis	Independent Chair
Helen Campbell	Independent (Education) & vice chair
Dr Pari Sreekumar	Independent (Medical Advisor)
Gill Merry	Elected Member & vice chair
Cheryl Boam	Social Worker Representative
Gill Gardner	Social Worker Representative
Dawn Ankers-Phillips	Social Worker Representative
Dianne Dunn	Independent (Foster Carer)
Dean Latham	Independent (Cared For leaver)
Julie Ollerhead	Independent
Linda Smith	Independent
Pauline Barber	Independent
Dianne Grant	Social Worker Representative

11. However, of those listed, several resigned during the year, due to changes in their personal or professional lives. These were Helen Campbell, Dianne Dunn, Gill Gardner and Julie Ollerhead. Linda Smith, Pauline Barber and Dianne Grant were recruited during the year.
12. The panel vice chairs were Helen Campbell and Gill Merry, but as stated above, Helen Campbell resigned during the review year. In the absence of the appointed chair, two meetings during the year were chaired by one of the vice chairs.
13. Since the resignation of Dianne Dunn, the panel has lacked a foster carer representative. Despite best and continuing efforts to recruit one. The Service Advisor is currently exploring the possibility of recruiting a representative from Cheshire West.
14. Securing social work representation for panel meetings is a continuing challenge. For several meetings, it was necessary for the Service Advisor to act as the social worker representative. Due to their workload, some social worker representatives are able to commit to only a few meetings each year.
15. The recruitment of new social work representatives has been a continuing priority and is increasingly pressing. Conflict of interest has meant that it has often been necessary to have

changes of social worker representation for different agenda items, which is disruptive to the panel meeting. In addition, there are fundamental issues about the propriety of members of the fostering or children's social work service being panel members and scrutinising the work of their colleagues. For this reason, the recruitment of Dianne Grant was particularly welcome and it is hoped that other social worker representatives can be recruited who are independent practitioners or employed by other agencies,

16. The medical advisor, Pari Sreekumar, is very helpful to the work of the panel and contributes fully. Her workload is such that she is not able to participate in every meeting but when she is not able to attend, she does discuss any relevant medical issues with the social workers and/or Service Advisor.
17. The participation of Gill Merry, a committed and knowledgeable elected member, continues to be helpful both for her contribution to panel's deliberations and for providing a link with the local authority's wider corporate parenting agenda.
18. Occasionally, an observer will attend a panel meeting. The observer is usually a new practitioner or prospective central list member. At least one observer was present at 14 of the meetings held during the year.

### **Central list members' appraisals**

19. Although there is no requirement for both officers to be involved in central list members' appraisals, previously, these were conducted jointly by the chair and agency/Service Advisor. To address practical difficulties with this model, the chair completed the last round of appraisals single handed. Central list members appraisals were completed in June. In addition to making it more straightforward to organise the appraisals, this approach enabled to Service Advisor to focus on recruitment of new central list members.

### **Central list members' training and development**

20. An annual training plan is developed from central list members' annual reviews. There were two formal development events during the review year. In May, panel was formally briefed on the newly introduced long term matching process; in October, the agenda for a training day included a session on Family and Friends care, led by an experienced external practitioner; a presentation of the "Signs of Safety" model and a review of panel processes.
21. All central list members can apply for any of the training offered to foster carers, including the e-learning programme.

### **Panel development**

22. The panel chair, vice chairs, Service Manager, other relevant managers and the IRO responsible for foster carers' reviews meet twice a year with the Agency Decision Maker. That meeting makes proposals for the development of the panel and agency practice. For example, the most recent meeting discussed the need for a consistent approach to the assessment of "support carers", improvements in Liquid Logic and the outdated nature of the digital devices provided to panel members.

**PANEL ACTIVITY**

23. The tables below provide data on panel activity for the review year. Where available, data on activity in the previous year is included to allow some comparison.

**Assessments of prospective foster carers**

	April 2018 – March 2019	April 2017 – March 2018
Total number of assessments recommended for approval	29	43
Of the total, number of same sex couples	0	1
Of the total, number of single applicants	14	11
Of the total, number of Family & Friends assessments	20	25
Number of negative assessments	4	4

## Notes:

1. Of the single applicants, 10 were female and 4 male
2. In three of the Family and Friends cases, the assessment was completed prior to the placement of the child/ren concerned.
3. The negative assessments were all Family and Friends applications.
4. All but two of the applicants were White British.

24. Panel did not support the Fostering Service's positive conclusion in one Family and Friends case and did not recommend the prospective carers as suitable to foster. The Agency Decision Maker subsequently decided to approve the carer.

25. The assessment data indicates a significant decrease in assessment activity during the review year, both mainstream and Family and Friends, with 14 fewer cases being approved than in the previous year. It should be noted that the figures only reflect those cases presented to the panel; there will be many more assessments that do not proceed to that stage. That stated, the same applied to previous years' figures.

**Terminations of registration**

	2018-2019		2017-2018	
	M	F&F	M	F&F
Retired	0	0	0	0
Other personal circumstances	9	8	12	0
Carer's unavailability/restrictive matching considerations	0	0	1	0
Safeguarding concerns	0	0	1	0
Child returned to birth parent	0	3	0	3
Placement breakdown	0	2	1	0
Special guardianship order made	1	5	1	6
Carer moved out of area	2	0	0	0
Child turned 18/moved to independent living	0	0	0	0
Issues with agency support	1	1	3	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>

26. The terminations of approval shown in the table were initiated by the foster carers' resignation. In another four cases, panel recommended that foster carers' approval be terminated following negative reports from the Fostering Service. Three of these were mainstream foster carers and one a Family and Friends foster carer. In addition, the Agency Decision Maker terminated the approval of a Family and Friends foster carer, whom panel had recommended as suitable against the recommendation of the service. These five cases are included in the review data given below.
27. From the panel data of assessments and terminations of approval, it appears that only 9 new mainstream fostering households were recruited during the review year and a total of 16 lost, obviously resulting in an overall loss of 7 fostering households. This compares to a loss of one household in the previous year.

### Reviews

28. It is a regulatory requirement that all first annual reviews of foster carer/s reviews be presented to panel and that panel should also consider any other review when requested to do so by the fostering service. The latter will include any review held following concerns or complaint about a carer's conduct (whether or not the concern or complaint was substantiated) or change in the carers' circumstances with the potential to affect their role as foster carers.
29. Practice in Cheshire East is that all foster carers' terms of approval are general, i.e. foster carers are
- Approved to provide placements within the usual fostering limits, or
  - Approved as Family and Friends foster carers for a specific child/ren, or
  - Approved as short break foster carers.
30. Detail of the children for whom they may be considered, e.g. number, gender and age, are given in the matching considerations. Every review considers whether the foster carer/s continues to be suitable to be registered and whether the matching considerations continue to be appropriate.
31. A total of 24 reviews were presented to panel in the year, 18 of mainstream foster carers and 6 of Family and Friends foster carers. Of the total:
- 12 were first annual reviews;
  - 2 were early reviews requested by the Agency Decision Maker to check progress in addressing concerns identified when the carers were recommended for approval.
  - 4 were held following a Local Authority Designated Officer investigation, i.e. where there were allegations or concerns of a safeguarding nature.
  - 3 held due to some agency concerns
  - 2 following a change in the foster carers' circumstances.
  - 1 was held to consider a variation in matching considerations. It was subsequently clarified that such reviews need not be presented to the panel.
32. The low number of first annual reviews of Family and Friends foster carers presented to panel may be explained by the number of such cases where special guardianship orders are made with a year of the carers' approval.

33. All reviews were chaired by an officer independent of the service. In all but one case panel supported the review recommendation. The exception was one of the 5 reviews that recommended the termination of the carers' approval. It concerned a Family and Friends foster carer whose approval the Agency Decision Maker decided to terminate.

**Matches for long term fostering**

34. A revised policy for long term matching of children with foster carers was implemented during the review year, which requires such cases to be presented to the panel. 20 such cases were presented during the review year, the majority in October and November, which necessitated the extra panel meetings mentioned above.
35. 25 children were matched with 20 families. Six of these children were in sibling pairs and there was one sibling group of 3. The average age of the children was about 11½, with the youngest being 6 and the oldest 17; both of these were in sibling pairs.
36. All of the children were already placed with the foster carers. The average time in the placement was about 21½ months, with the shortest being 12 months and the longest 37 months.
37. Many of these arrangements involved making a child-centred long term commitment to an independent fostering agency placement.

**Other panel business**

Regulation 24 placement notifications	2018-2019	2017-2018
	28	34

Regulation 25 requests	2018-2019	2017-2018
	20	16

38. As in previous years, most Regulation 25 requests were prompted by outstanding checks, including medical reports and DBS checks. This was the main reason for the need for extra time to complete the assessment in 11 of the 20 cases. The difficulty in obtaining prospective foster carers' medicals from certain GP practices has been raised repeatedly. In 9 of the 20 cases, no full assessment was subsequently presented; different arrangements will have been made for the children concerned.
39. As noted in the six month quality assurance report for the period April – September 2018, in a small minority of cases, the maximum time limit for the temporary approval of Family and Friends foster carers was exceeded, resulting in the placements being unregulated. In some cases, there appears to be a delay between the placement being made and it being authorised by a manager as a Regulation 24 placement and assessment by the Fostering Service being triggered. Panel queries the legal status of the placement during this period.
40. More positively, there have been no instances of the children's social work service failing to recognise an arrangement as a Regulation 24 placement, indicating that this is now well understood.

Notification of exemption to the usual fostering limit	2018-2019	2017-2018
	7	2

Deferred/withdrawn agenda items	2018-2019	2017-2018
	2	1

41. The Agency Decision Maker deferred making a decision in respect of one case, requesting that additional work be completed with the applicant and the assessment be re-presented to panel in 3 months. In the other case, an annual review, panel found that in the absence of the foster carer's views and other essential information, the reports did not constitute an annual review and deferred its consideration pending further information.

### Disruptions

42. A key area for panel development is learning from disruptions. Panel should be notified of all disruptions and receive the learning points from the Disruption Review for its consideration. Panel was notified of 2 disruptions during the review year, both in the first half of the year. The learning from the agency's review of these disruptions has yet to be presented to panel.

### Agency decision maker

43. During the review year, the Agency Decision Maker supported all but three of the recommendations made by the panel. These were:
- The case noted above, when the Agency Decision Maker deferred her decision, pending further work with the applicant. She was subsequently approved.
  - A Family and Friends foster carer whose review was presented to the panel following a LADO investigation. Panel did not accept the Fostering Service's recommendation that the carer's approval should be terminated. The Agency Decision Maker overruled the panel's recommendation and decided to terminate approval.
  - An assessment of a prospective Family and Friends foster carer who the Agency Decision Maker approved against panel's recommendation.
44. The Agency Decisions Maker's response to panel advice, observations on cases, panel's decisions and follow up actions for service managers, practitioners or the service advisor are valued by the panel. To provide panel with feedback on actions allocated by the Agency Decision Maker to service managers or practitioners, the Service Advisor, in collaboration with the panel administrator, has developed and refined a "panel advice tracker" which is providing feedback.

### FEEDBACK FROM THOSE ATTENDING PANEL

45. Foster carers, social workers and managers attending panel are asked to complete a simple pro forma, noting their experience, attached at Appendix 1. 121 forms were completed and as in previous years, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. The majority found the venue to be good or excellent, with a minority of 16 rating it only satisfactory. All of the forms recorded the panel chair and members to be welcoming and approachable, albeit a minority of 9 recorded this as only "partly". All but 2 recorded the questions asked to be clear and relevant, the exceptions being social workers. A substantial majority recorded feeling that their views were listened to, with one, a child's social worker, responding that they felt they were neither fully nor partly listened to.

46. One supervising social worker recorded attending panel as a negative experience. Two applicants, 3 foster carers, one supervising social worker, one child's social worker and two managers found it neither positive nor negative. Thus the majority found it a positive experience.
47. The pro forma invites respondents to suggest anything that could be done differently. Only a small minority of respondents take up this invitation and most of those that do use the opportunity to comment further on their experience of the panel.
48. Existing foster carers were unanimously positive in their comments. The majority of prospective foster carers commented that they found the panel welcoming and friendly, but two reported finding the panel intimidating, as did two supervising social workers. Other social workers' comments were largely positive; one supervising social worker and one child's social worker commented on panel's lack of understanding of court proceedings, contact and resources.
49. Of particular concern was the comment by one supervising social worker stating that panel's attitude to Family and Friends applicants is generally negative. This prompted a development event for panel, led by an external speaker. The structure of panel's initial discussion of cases was changed whereby panel members are invited to identify the applicants/foster carers strengths, as well as their vulnerabilities. It is hoped that this approach will ensure a focus on the positives, without ignoring or minimising any negatives.
50. The pro forma does not invite comment from foster carers about their experience of assessment and training. This is often mentioned during their discussion with panel and most foster carers are positive about the assessment process and the assessing social workers. They are also positive about the training provided, although some existing foster carers comment on the difficulties in participating in training as most is held only on week days or because there are no crèche facilities. The availability of e-learning and of some Saturday training is welcomed.

### **FEEDBACK FROM PANEL MEMBERS**

51. Feedback from panel members is a standing agenda item and is recorded by the panel administrator. As stated in previous annual reports, much of this feedback relates to individual cases, noting for example exceptional foster carers or assessments.
52. Common themes include:
  - The negative impact of frequent changes or extended absence of social workers
  - The child's voice is often reported but panel repeatedly requests that children/young people be encouraged to make a direct contribution.
  - Difficulties in ensuring the panel is quorate, due to a lack of social work members.
  - The need for a clear agency policy governing the response to unplanned placement endings.
  - Family and Friends assessments that do not explicitly address suitability to foster.
  - Problems with Liquid Logic formats.
  - The long delay in the presentation of proposed matches.
  - Where applicable, matching reports need to confirm that funding has been agreed, should open with details of the foster carers' household and some brief information about the child's family.

## QUALITY ASSURANCE

### Timescales for assessments of prospective foster carers

53. The agency target for the completion of mainstream assessments is 18 weeks; it assumed that the service monitors performance against this target. Panel data is available only on Family and Friends assessments. As stated above, of the 20 completed assessments presented during the review year, only 9 had been completed during the standard 16 weeks, an extension of the temporary approval having been agreed in the other 11 cases.

### Reports to panel

54. The Service Advisor gate keeps reports for panel and contacts practitioners/managers, advising on any necessary improvements prior to the report's presentation to panel. He has also met with managers to clarify panel's expectations.

### Assessments

55. The assessment report is fundamental to Panel's judgement of the quality of any assessment, supplemented by the presentation of the assessing social worker at the panel meeting. Panel's judgement can also be influenced by relevant comment made by the prospective foster carer/s during the meeting.

56. Panel will deem an assessment report to be of sufficient quality when it is seen to provide comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the applicant/s, identifies strengths and vulnerabilities, and makes clear and persuasive the reasons for the recommendation and matching considerations, thus reflecting a sound assessment.

57. When reading assessment reports, Panel members routinely check that all required basic components of an assessment have been completed, for example

- that checks, medicals and references have been completed;
- the applicant's history, relevant experience, motivation and understanding of the fostering task explored;
- that applicants have participated in the Skills to Foster training (where appropriate) and have expressed a commitment to further training and development;
- that any children or relevant ex-partners have been consulted;
- that any health and safety issues have been addressed.

58. When introducing an assessment, the Panel chair routinely asks Panel members whether the report provide sufficient information on which to base discussion and make a recommendation. Occasionally, panel will agree to ask the assessing social worker to provide verbally any missing factual information. During the review year, panel did not defer its consideration of any assessment due to concern about the quality of the report.

### Reviews

59. Panel is content with the basic framework for reviews, all of which are chaired by an officer independent of the Fostering Service. There has been an improvement over the review year in children's social workers contributing to foster carers' reviews, although this is still not universal. Panel's concerns about the child's voice are discussed below.

60. There has also been an improvement in the timeliness of the presentation of reviews to panel.

61. As in previous years, in the small number of reviews prompted by concerns, Panel was satisfied that the investigations had been robust and the conclusions justified.

## **Long term matches**

62. Overall, panel is satisfied with the reports presented when a long term match is being recommended for its consideration. The format of the key report is very helpful, in that it requires the child's needs to be identified by the social worker, with the foster carers indicating how they meet those needs and concludes with the responsible managers' summary of their reasons for recommending the match.
63. However, panel has repeatedly requested that a brief introduction be provided, giving details of the foster carers' household. Without this information, panel does not know, for example, if there are any other children in the placement, which can be a key factor in considering the proposed match. Panel has also asked that brief details of the child's birth family be included in the introduction, to enable it to understand contact arrangements, etc. There has been no response to this request.

## **Termination of approval**

64. Panel receives the foster carer/s' letter of resignation supported by a brief report from the supervising social worker, which provides the necessary information. As is the case with reviews, there has been a continuing improvement in the timeliness of the presentation of resignations to the Panel.

## **The QA pro forma**

65. Fostering panel members' view of the quality of reports is captured using the pro forma attached at Appendix 2. The pro forma is completed by consensus after each agenda item and copied to the social worker and practice manager/team manager. Panel draws attention to any significant factual errors to ensure that they can be corrected.
66. As noted in previous reports, it is recognised that the pro forma is a blunt instrument and can be subjective. However, it has been reviewed informally with the conclusion that it supports a reasonable analysis of the reports within the panel time available.
67. A summary of the pro forma completed during the review year is attached at Appendix 3. As in previous years, the summary indicates that, with a few exceptions, most of the reports presented to the panel meet the positive measures.
68. The summary includes that given in the QA report for the first 6 months of the review year. There has been little change, so most of the comments made then are reiterated in the comments below.
- Almost all were judged to be well written, readily understandable and up to date.
  - A minority were noted to include factual errors or be out of date. In most cases, the errors would be minor, e.g. dates. In a small minority of Family and Friends assessments, the child's social worker's contribution can be out of date
  - Most provided sufficient detail and an appropriate level of analysis; deficiencies in these areas would be addressed during panel's discussion with the social workers and applicants.
  - In all but two mainstream assessments, there was evidence that issues of equality and diversity had been addressed. This was judged to be the case in the majority of Family

and Friends assessments, and there was improved performance against this measure in matches and reviews. In the latter, several pro forma recorded issues of equality and diversity as not being applicable, as it was considered unreasonable to expect these to be explicitly addressed.

- In the main, the views of children are represented, but there is comment on this below.
- Reports were signed, confirming that they had been read by all concerned. However, sometimes the version of an assessment circulated to panel members does not include signatures; it is understood that this is one of the issues with the digital record. In those cases, panel is assured that there is a signed copy on file and applicants confirm that they have read the report.

69. The pro forma allows panel to make specific comment on the report or practice in the case. Examples of such comments made by panel are “Report very confusing as children’s initials used inconsistently”; “Six month delay between SSW’s report and the review ...”; “Report out of date”.
70. A comment made repeatedly is that the report would have benefitted had it included the children’s views as expressed by the children and young people themselves. Frequently, children’s views are reported second hand, e.g. “child A said they are happy in the placement.” There is increasing evidence that children and young people are being encouraged and supported to make a direct contribution, with panel receiving material ranging from detailed notes written by young people to drawings from young children. However, this is far from universal. Panel appreciates that some children and young people will refuse to engage with such an exercise, but questions if it is always attempted.
71. That stated, one recent panel was delighted to meet the young people concerned when a long term match was being considered. The young people were invited to meet the panel and make any comment they wished about the match, but were not present for the discussion with the foster carers and social workers.
72. Family and Friends assessment are often dual purpose, also serving as Special Guardianship assessments. In some cases in care proceedings, it is evident that the local authority is to recommend Special Guardianship as the outcome of the proceedings, but that they will not conclude within the maximum 24 weeks allowed for the assessment. In order to maintain the regulated status of the placement, it is necessary for it to continue as a foster placement. Previous panel chair’s reports have commented that a small number of Family and Friends assessments presented to panel made no reference to the applicant’s suitability to foster. This omission has now largely been addressed.

### **Quality assurance conclusion**

73. Overall, panel the Fostering Panel continues to be satisfied with the standard of practice and the quality of the reports presented to it. There is evidence of improving practice, for example children’s social workers understanding of Regulation 24; assessing social workers addressing prospective Family and Friends foster carers’ understanding of and ability to meet the fostering standards; placing social workers’ contribution to reviews.
74. Although there is the occasional outlier, panel deems the majority of reports presented as being fit for purpose and authors are usually able to provide any missing information during the discussion with the panel.

75. While still in need of further development, the improvement in the timeliness of review and resignation reports largely has been maintained, as has the improvement in the inclusion in reviews of feedback from placing social workers.
76. The inclusion of the child's voice and means to do so remains an area for development, in particular in Family and Friends assessments and matches.

### **ANNUAL REPORT CONCLUSION**

77. Although the number of assessments presented to panel has decreased, the panel's work has been increased by the new responsibility to consider long term matches. The change in the usual frequency of panel meetings from fortnightly to three weekly, introduced in the previous year, has worked well in the main, although it was necessary to convene additional meetings in October and November to accommodate long term matches.
78. Most prospective foster carers report positively on their experience of assessment and training. Foster carers and most presenting social workers are positive about their experience of attending the panel, feel that questions are relevant and sensitively expressed and that they are listened to.
79. Panel notes that reports have improved and that most are of good quality. Placing social workers now more usually contribute to reviews and there is an improvement in ensuring the child's voice is heard, although this remains an area for development. The presentation of reviews and resignations is usually timely. The Liquid Logic system and templates seem to cause some difficulties.
80. The three cases in which the Agency Decision Maker decision was contrary to the panel's recommendation involved delicate issues of balance between fostering standards and the wellbeing of individual children. This was the case in the previous year and panel did not perceive these cases as indicating any lack of confidence in its work.
81. The introduction of a tool to track the agency's response to panel advice or comments is welcomed.
82. The apparent overall reduction in the number of mainstream foster carers is a concern. Panel has asked for a briefing on the Fostering Service's response to foster carers' resignations. Panel is aware that the service of retiring foster carers is celebrated and that mainstream foster carers are usually offered an exit interview when they resign. Panel is interested in what attempts are made to retain foster carers and whether consideration is given to exploring whether resigning Family and Friends foster carers might be suitable as mainstream carers.
83. The learning from disruption reviews/unplanned placement endings is important in informing panel practice. It is unfortunate that there has been no such feedback to panel during the review year.
84. During the review year, the children presented to panel for long term matches have been in placement on average for over 21 months. After such a length of time, panel would have to have grave concerns for the child's safety and wellbeing not to recommend the long term match, raising doubts about panel's role in such cases. It is hoped that these long delays are due to a backlog in long term matches, following the introduction of the new process.

85. The following lists the priorities for panel development included in the 2016/17 annual report and a note of their progress.

#### Priorities for panel development 2018/2019

Task	Aim	Outcome
Panel members' appraisals	To comply with requirements	Members' appraisals completed in June 2018
Recruitment of social workers to the central list	To reduce difficulties in convening a quorate panel	An independent social worker was recruited but this is a continuing task
IRO's perception of panel	Seek to identify the IRO and discuss	It was not possible to identify the IRO
Refresh panel development programme	Review during members' appraisals and set date for training event	Training event held on 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2018
Provide feedback to panel on agency's response to advice/comment	Implement tracker tool, review and refine	Tracker tool refined and implemented. Service advisor provides feedback to panel.
Permanence/matching policy	Book briefing for panel on revised policy, practice and its role	Briefing provided on 23 <sup>rd</sup> May 2018
Panel data	Review data set to ensure all relevant details are being included	Data set reviews but this is an area for continuing development

#### Priorities for panel development 2019/2020

In some respects, the development of the panel is dependent on the development of the agency's practice. As described in paragraph 22 above, panel's suggestions about this are discussed in the forum with the Agency Decision Maker and other managers. The new "tracker tool" also provides an opportunity for panel to contribute to the development of practice.

There will be a new panel chair in the next year, who will have their own views about the development of the panel. However, there are some continuing tasks, which include

- The recruitment of social work representatives, independent of the agency'.
- The recruitment of a foster carer.
- The introduction of questions for applicants, developed by a forum of cared for young people.
- Updating the panel "welcome book".
- Confirming Gill Merry's continuing role as vice chair and identifying a second vice chair
- Further refining the data set

Shelley Lewis  
Outgoing Independent Fostering Panel Chair

5th April 2019

# Fostering Panel Evaluation



**Date of Panel:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I am a (please✓) . . .**

**Foster Carer**

**Prospective Foster Carer**

**Supervising Social Worker**

**Social Worker**

**Other**

**1. How did you feel about the venue and waiting facilities? Were they . . .**

Satisfactory  Good  Excellent

If you wish to include any additional comments, please do so here:

**2. Did you feel the Panel Chair and Panel Members were welcoming and approachable?**

Yes  Partly  No

If you wish to include any additional comments, please do so here:

**3. Were the questions asked of you and others present clear and relevant?**

Yes  Partly  No

If you wish to include any additional comments, please do so here:

**3. Do you think Panel members listened to and took account of your views?**

Yes  Partly  No

If you wish to include any additional comments, please do so here:

**4. What was your overall experience of attending Panel today?**

Positive  Neither Positive nor Negative  Negative

If you wish to include any additional comments, please do so here:

**If you wish to include any suggestions for anything that could be done differently, please do so here:**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this evaluation

# FOSTERING PANEL

## QUALITY ASSURANCE FEEDBACK REPORT

Date of Fostering Panel Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1 Type of Case *(please tick)*

1. Approval
2. Matching
3. Review (change)
3. Resignation
5. Deregistration

Assessing Supervising Social Worker's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mainstream Supervising Social Worker's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Social Worker's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of foster carers \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Child (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

GENERAL FEEDBACK ON REPORTS	Y	N	N/A
The report is well written and readily understandable			
The reports contain grammatical and/or typing errors affecting meaning			
The reports contain factual errors / is out of date			
The reports provide sufficient detail for panel recommendation			
There is an appropriate level of analysis			
There is robust evidence that issues of equality and diversity have been addressed			
The report contains the views of the applicants' own children <i>(where appropriate)</i>			
The report contains the views of foster children <i>(where appropriate)</i>			
The report contains the view of the child concerned <i>(where appropriate)</i>			
The report has been signed by all parties			
Confirmation that actions are carried out			

cont'd...

**Additional Comments on the report**

**Any comments on practice**

**Any Comments on Presentation to Panel**

Form completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date seen by Social Worker \_\_\_\_\_

Date seen by Practice Manager \_\_\_\_\_

## SUMMARY OF REPORTS QUALITY ASSURANCE PRO FORMA: 2018 - 2019

	Mainstream Assessment			Family & Friends Assessment			Match			Reviews		
	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	Yes	No	N/A
The report is well written and readily understandable	20	3		10	1		18	2		21	2	
The report contains grammatical and/or typing errors affecting meaning		23			11			20			23	
The report contains factual errors/is out of date	4	19		2	9		1	19		1	22	
The report provides sufficient detail for panel to make a recommendation	21	2		8	3		19	1		22	1	
There is an appropriate level of analysis	20	3		8	3		20			22		1
There is robust evidence that issues of equality and diversity have been addressed	21	2		9	2		16	3	1	14	3	8
The report contains the views of the applicants' own child/ren (where appropriate)	12	3	8	3	1	7	5	2	13	13	2	6
The report contains the views of a foster child/ren (where appropriate)	3	1	19	1		9	16	1	3	17	3	3
The report contains the view of the child/ren concerned (where appropriate)	4	2	17	4		7	5	1	14	5		18
Reports were signed by all parties	20	3		10	1		17	3		21	1	
Confirmation the actions are carried out	4	1	1	2	1	2	1		1	4		2

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## Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Report 2018/2019

### Foreword

As corporate parents, it is our responsibility and duty to treat our children in care and care leavers as we would our own children; championing and promoting their needs at every opportunity. That is why the Corporate Parenting Committee is one of the most important committees in the Council; our role and remit is to challenge and hold to account the services provided by the Council and our partners for all cared for children and care leavers in Cheshire East.

This year we have focused on strengthening our collective role as corporate parents. The launch of our new three year Corporate Parenting Strategy, including five key pledges to cared for children and care leavers sets out the joint commitment of Council staff, elected members and partner agencies to improve outcomes for our children and young people. I am pleased to report that our full Council signed up to the pledges in December 2018.

The contribution from children and young people from My Voice (our children in care council) has been invaluable in helping us to understand their experiences and how we can better support them. At our Star Celebration event in November 2018 we celebrated the achievements of each and every one of our cared for children and care leavers.

Whilst the committee has scrutinised a number of services over the year, there has also been some external scrutiny and

challenge. A Focussed Visit from Ofsted in October 2018 looked at our arrangements for permanency planning and achieving permanence, with a specific focus on children in residential and foster care, and on children subject to care orders who are placed at home with parents. This showed that children have increasingly benefitted from our strengthened focus on permanence planning at both strategic and operational levels, however there is more to do around improving their assessments and plans.

In addition, the follow up visit from Mark Riddell, the National Advisor for Care Leavers, in October 2018 confirmed that we have a strong offer for our care leavers. He also recognised how our 'elected members have embraced a 'Championing' approach which in essence enables elected members to get into the detail of the offer to care leavers'.



I am pleased to present the Committee's 2018-19 Annual Report. This highlights our progress and achievements over what has been a busy year. There is still more we can do to improve outcomes for our cared for children and care leavers and this report also sets out our priorities for the forthcoming year.

*Cllr Jos Saunders*

## The Corporate Parenting Committee

Effective Corporate Parenting requires knowledge and awareness of the needs of cared for children, young people leaving care as well as the services that they receive. Our Corporate Parenting responsibility is a shared one that requires a high level of commitment from the leadership of the council as well as the support of all council employees as well as our partners.

The Corporate Parenting Committee is comprised of twelve cross party members with Council Officers in attendance to support agenda items as a when required. The Committee is assisted by Democratic Service Officers.

The Committee has met on six occasions over between April 2018 and April 2019

9<sup>th</sup> May 2018

3<sup>rd</sup> July 2018

18<sup>th</sup> September 2018

13<sup>th</sup> November 2018

22<sup>nd</sup> January 2019

19<sup>th</sup> March 2019

The Committee receives regular updates on local and national issues relating to cared for children and young people who are leaving care

The function of the Committee is to oversee the Corporate Parenting responsibilities of everyone involved with cared for children and young people with Cheshire East Council and with our partners

It works to ensure that the statutory duties placed upon Cheshire East Council are met.

The Committee has reviewed its Terms of Reference for 2019-20 and the revised version is attached at Appendix 1.



## Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledges

The new Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018-20 sets out a number of pledges we are making to our cared for children and care leavers. These are based on what these children and young people have told us will make the most difference to their lives:

### Pledge One

**We will be a good corporate parent**

### Pledge Two

**We will improve education, training and employment outcomes**

### Pledge Three

**We will work to achieve permanence and keep children safe**

### Pledge Four

**We will improve health and wellbeing outcomes**

### Pledge Five

**We will prepare young people for adulthood**

Each Committee meeting is focused on one of the Corporate Parenting Pledges from the new Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018-20. Performance reporting and impact is scrutinised by the Committee, along with issues and risks.

**Five Work-stream Groups**, aligned to the five pledge areas, have been established to ensure that this strategy is delivered effectively.



## Corporate Parenting Strategy Progress

### Pledge One

We will be a good corporate parent
Staff and elected members will understand their roles and responsibilities and be <b>ambitious corporate parents, who advocate and champion</b> the needs of cared for children and care leavers in everything they do.
We will <b>know ourselves and the needs of our children and young people well</b> and design and deliver services that meet these needs.
<b>Decisions</b> about children and young people's lives, and the services that support them, <b>will be made with them and for them</b> . We will always value their views.

### What the data tells us

- At the end of March 2019 there were 483 children and young people being cared for by Cheshire East. This is an increase of 6 children and young people from March 2018.
- This equates to 63 cared for children per 10,000 of the child population within Cheshire East which is the same as last year

## What have we done? (Committee and Officers)

- We have reviewed and refreshed the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018 – 2020
- The Committee have ensured that the seven principals for corporate parenting have been incorporated into our 'Local Offer' and has been instrumental in the development of our 'pledges' to cared for children and care leavers, which I am so happy to say, received commitment across all political groups at the full council held on 8th December 2018
- We have considered the Children's Social Care Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2018 – 2020
- The Committee have given consideration to the outcomes of the Care Crisis Review, which was facilitated by the Family Rights Group to examine the reason for the national rise in care proceedings and the rise in children entering the care system
- We have received quarterly updates on our cared for children and care leavers through the Corporate Parenting Scorecard.
- We have had regular updates from the Participation Team and as the Chair I have attended 'My Voice' to develop a direct relationships with some of our cared for children
- Members of the Committee have attended corporate parenting work streams and we have developed guidance for corporate parent visits to services

- The vast majority of elected members have undertaken corporate parenting training and completed 'Pen-Pictures'
- We have ensured that cared for children have advocacy by supporting the extension of the 'Voice for Children' contract by twelve months
- We celebrated the achievements of all of our cared for children and care leavers at the Star Celebration held at Wychwood Park in November
- Officers and some elected members have completed 'Signs of Safety' training
- We celebrated the Cared for Children's Service achieving the Investing in Children Award.

### What impact has it made?

- Following feedback received directly from our children and young people we changed the name of their service from the Permanence and Through Care Service to the Service for Care for Children and Care Leavers
- We are already seeing an impact which we believe is due to the implementation of our 'Signs of Safety' model, through a reducing trend in cared for numbers over the past year and a more recent decrease in the number of applications being filed with the Family Court.

### Next steps

- New members of the committee will need to attend training and complete their own 'Pen Picture'

- Celebrate the achievements of our cared for children at this year's Star celebration being held on 24th November at Tatton Park. Come as a Pirate or Princess!!!!
- New members will need to be linked to the Corporate Parenting work streams as well as being included within the corporate parent service visit rota.



## Plledge Two

We will improve education, employment and training outcomes
We will have <b>high aspirations</b> for every child and young person and will <b>help them to achieve their ambitions</b> , using opportunities in the 'family business' and our contacts so that they can be <b>happy and successful</b> in their education, training and employment.
Every child and young person will have an <b>education plan that is targeted to enable them to reach their full potential</b>
We will strive to that ensure that every child and young person will have <b>access to consistent, high quality, well matched, full time opportunities.</b>

### What the data tells us

- Attendance at both primary and secondary has improved this year with the average primary attendance rising from 95% to 97% and the average secondary attendance rising from 93% to 94%.
- 82% of cared for children are in 'Good' or 'Outstanding' schools
- 10% of our care leavers are attending University
- We have a small number of cared for children who live in residential schools, 9.

- 95% of cared for children have had their Personal Education Plan completed each term
- 100% of cared for children between were accessing 2 – 4year funding
- The percentage of cared for pupils who gained Level 4 and above in Maths and English was 19%, which is the same as last year and slightly above the National average and 54% of the cohort that gained 5+ GCSE qualifications between grades 9 and 1.

### What have we done? (Committee and Officers)

- We have considered the outcomes from the Local Area SEND Inspection and the development of a new Special School in Crewe
- We received the Annual Report from the Head of the Virtual School and considered how she would monitor the changes in the administration of the Pupil Premium funding
- In August we heard about the £1,000 bursary that the Government has introduced to secure apprenticeships' for care leavers.

### What impact has it made?

- A SPEED (Sixteen plus education and employment destinations) working group was set up in 2015 and is now well established as a forum for issue raising and action planning for post-16 cared for and care leavers. This group uses the latest data to identify young people

who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or likely to be so and what can be done to address this. Good collaboration across the young person's network has resulted in the level of NEET amongst care leavers to reduce from 32% in May 2017 to 15% in May 2018.

- A parallel group for school age children has now been established called RAIC, (Raising achievement in care). The aim of this group is to ensure that all parties share the responsibility for promoting aspirations and achievements and are active in their efforts

### Next steps

- Identify and implement changes resulting from the Social Care Bill which includes Virtual School Head teacher to have responsibilities for previously looked after children as well as looked after children and to promote mental health and attachment awareness in schools



## Pledge Three

### We will work to achieve permanence and keep children safe

We will strive to ensure that every child and young person will have the **opportunity to live in a good, safe home locally**, either with their family or in another permanent home. All decisions will be made and reviewed with them without delay.

We will **respect those people who are important to our children and young people** and make sure that these safe relationships are sustained.

We will **keep children and young people safe**.

## What the data tells us

- 97% for cared for Children Reviews took place within statutory timescales with 100% of these children being involved directly in their reviews
- 265 cared for children live with foster families, 65 live with family and friend carers, 53 live with their parents, 52 children have plans for adoption and 33 live within residential care.
- 96 children achieved a plan for permanence with their foster carers and a further 13 have remained in 'staying put' arrangements with their foster carers after they became 18

- 30% of children who ceased to be cared for during the past year have become subject to Special Guardianship Orders



## What have we done? (Committee and Officers)

- We have heard about the development of our new residential children's homes project and the organisations there were successful as part of our tender process. The committee have regularly been updated in relation to the mobilisation of the 5, 3 bedded homes and how these are developing into a wrap around hub based model, which

will be similar to the North Yorkshire 'No Wrong Door' model which has received national recognition. Following co-production activities at 'My Voice' Children and Young People have named this project 'Bespoke'

- We gave consideration to the DfE commissioned Foster Care Review (Sir Martin Narey and Mark Owers) recommendations and heard from the Foster Care Panel chair through her annual report
- We considered the annual Independent Review Officers report and how the outcomes for our cared for children and care leavers are quality assured.
- We considered the Local Safeguarding Children's Board annual report and about the changes that will be introduced one the LSCB moves to the Children's Safeguarding Partnership
- We learnt about the national protocol for reducing the unnecessary criminalisation of cared for children

### What impact has it made?

- The amount of children and young people involved in their reviews is excellent performance and highlights that the voice of the child is prioritised within care planning

### Next steps

- Further develop our foster care services in line with the 36 recommendations of the Narey and Owers Review

- The committee needs to play an active role in the development of 'Bespoke'.



## Pledge Four

### We will improve health and wellbeing outcomes

We are committed to **understanding the health needs** of our children and young people **as early as possible** and to ensure they are **given the highest priority** in every service.

We will **equip** our children and young people to have **high aspirations for their own health**.

### What the data tells us

- 76 % of Initial Health Assessments (IHA's) are completed within 20 days
- 91% of cared for children have had their health reviews completed
- 63% of care leavers have been provided with a health passport

### What have we done? (Committee and Officers)

- We have considered the changes to the Family Nurse Partnership
- We have considered the annual health report for cared for children and care leavers

## What impact has it made?

- Due to the development of an escalation process across CWP and the Local Authority the timeliness of IHA's being completed within 20 days has improved, however we can do more to ensure that this improvement is sustained
- Young pregnant care leavers up to the age of 24 (previously 19) now have a named specialist nurse supporting them through their pregnancy up to the 2nd birthday of their child
- We have increased scrutiny of the cancelled or 'did not attend' (DNA'd) health appointments, which is also being monitored through the 'help me to be healthy' workstream

### Next steps

- Ensure more timely updates around health outcomes (due to the nature of the recording systems across social care and the NHS, the health report for cared for children is approximately 12 months out of date when the report is presented to Committee).
- Continued scrutiny of the IHA 20 day timeline and information around SDQs.



## Pledge Five

We will prepare young people for adulthood
We will <b>support young people early with the skills needed</b> to prepare for their future through access to a range of good quality services.
We will be a <b>consistent guide</b> for our young people. We will <b>celebrate their successes</b> and <b>support them when things don't go well.</b>
We will <b>respect our care leavers as young adults</b> and adapt our relationships to their needs.

### What the data tells us

- There are 234 Care Leavers who are currently eligible for services.
- 100% of care leavers have an up to date Pathway Plan
- There are 12 care Leavers who are currently in post 18 apprenticeships
- 25% of 16 to 18 year old care leavers are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Whilst there have been improvements in the number of NEET care leavers over the past 12 months due to the direct work being undertaken by the Personal Assistants we know that this is an area that requires additional scrutiny

### What have we done? (Committee and Officers)

- Care Leavers Annual Report
- Visited by Mark Riddell MBE – The National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers
- Recommissioned Supported Lodgings
- Developed Leaving Care Local Offer
- Care Leavers Covenant

### What impact has it made?

- All care Leavers have the opportunity to have a Personal Advisor up to the age of 25 which provides extended support as and when the young person may need it
- Mark Riddell's visit highlighted that our operational model was strong but that it could be improved through a better corporate offer. Corporate Parenting Committee decided to refocus and address buy-in from Health, Housing and adult service providers to better support care leavers as they move in independence.
- After his follow up visit in October he wrote us saying the following:

'I heard about the progress you have made regarding the new Corporate Parenting Duties that came into force on 1st April and how your elected members have embraced a 'Championing' approach which in essence enables elected members to get into the detail of the offer to care leavers.

The housing offer and opportunities in the family business are two examples of where elected members have paid particular attention and as a result your Ignition Panel is ensuring that the Housing offer is good and data relating to EET has improved. I also heard of your ambition to ensure care leavers have an offer from health up to 25yrs that is outside of eligibility and based on a needs led approach with clear ideas of redesigning a service to meet that need. Alongside this I heard about closer working relationships with your key partner agencies – DWP, Family Nurse Partnership, Mentors for care leavers through a commissioned approach with Pure Insight and a specialist worker in the team to support your UASC young people. Finally how you have captured the voice of care leavers by engaging them in the coproduction of the local offer which has extended to them being at the Corporate Parenting Board to ask the question ‘is this good enough for your child’.

- This has also been reflected in the nomination that our ‘Ignition Panel’ received for a national LGC Award in the category of public and private partnerships

## Next steps

- Our ‘preparing for adulthood’ model for children with disabilities and complex needs has been acknowledged by the government’s Chief Social Worker for Children and Families, Isabelle Trowler, who is planning on visiting us with her review and research team later in 2019.



## Priorities for 2019-20

- Review of the Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Committee
- Continue to develop the training off to Corporate parenting Committee members and all other elected members
- Support and scrutinise the development of the 'Bespoke' project
- Support and scrutinise the review of our fostering services
- Consider the impact of the Social Care Bill





## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **Cheshire East Corporate Parenting Committee**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Corporate Parenting Committee in its role as an advisory committee to the Cabinet is to ensure that the Council effectively discharges its role as Corporate Parent for all children and young people in care and care leavers from 0- 25 years of age and holds partners to account for the discharge of their responsibilities.

#### **Terms of Reference**

1. Act as advocates for cared for children and care leavers, ensuring that their needs are addressed through key plans, policies and strategies throughout the Council and its commissioned services.
2. Ensure key strategic plans and reports relating to children in care and care leavers including the Corporate Parenting Strategy, Sufficiency Statement and Children and Young People's Plan.
3. Oversee the implementation of Cheshire East's Corporate Parenting Strategy and action plan and monitor the quality and effectiveness of services to ensure they fulfil the council's responsibilities.
4. Monitor the quality of care delivered by Cheshire East's residential children's homes via the provision of reports including summary reports of Ofsted inspections.
5. Review the performance of the Council in relation to outcomes for children and young people in care via the scrutiny of both quarterly performance reports and annual reports, including the Health of Cared for Children and Care Leavers, the Virtual School, Fostering and the Independent Reviewing Service,.
6. Establish an environment whereby Elected Members and young people work together to address the needs and aspirations of Cheshire East's children and young people in care and empower children and young people to participate in decision making with adults.
7. Oversee, with the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the implementation of best practice principles in all aspects of service delivery, with the aim of producing positive outcomes for children and young people in care.
8. Support the work of foster carers and adopters in making a difference to the care and support they provide to children and young people in care and those adopted.

9. Make sure that staff and partners commit to follow the pledges to cared for children and young people and care leavers set out in the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

## **Governance**

The Committee will:

- meet bi-monthly;
- report to the Council's Cabinet on at least an annual basis;
- report to the Council's Scrutiny Committee annually; and
- include young people representatives from My Voice (Cheshire East's Children in Care Council).

## **Administration**

The Board will be serviced by Democratic Services in line with other Council Committees.

Minutes and agendas will be distributed and published no later than 5 clear working days prior to the meeting.

The meetings will take place out of school hours to enable cared for children and young people to participate.

## **Review**

These terms of reference will be reviewed yearly.



*Working for a brighter future together*

Version Number: 1
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## **BRIEFING REPORT**

### **Corporate Parenting Committee**

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**Date of Meeting:** 17 September 2019

**Report Title:** Corporate Parenting Update Report

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Dorothy Flude

**Author:** Keith Martin, Head of Cared for Children and Care Leavers

**Senior Officer:** Mark Palethorpe, Acting Executive Director of People

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#### **1. Introduction and Policy Context**

- 1.1. This report provides an update to the Corporate Parenting Committee on national and local developments in relation to cared for children and young people and care leavers.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1. This update report aligns with the pledges of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

#### **3. Quarter 1 Corporate Parenting Scorecard**

- 3.1. The Quarter 1 Corporate Parenting Scorecard is attached at Appendix 1. In relation to those measures RAG rated red:
  - Measure 2.6 - % of secondary pupils with less than 90% attendance – The Virtual School Head meets with Advisors every 3 weeks to review all children and young people below 90% attendance. This includes analysing data for exclusions due to impact on attendance. Actions and targets are in place with a clear tracking document to review all children to monitor. Actions are put in place with Advisors to look at all children below 92% to set clear actions to support improving Persistent Absence figures. Analysis shows many children below 90% are those that are placed with parents/friends and family. This

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data has been shared through the workstream meetings to look at how we can support through joint services. The Virtual School has a full time dedicated attendance worker from May 2019 to support targeted work with schools and families. This number has increased in June due to Year 11 leavers being recorded as study leave for a period of time. We will be introducing two attendance leads within the Virtual School Team to support reducing this figure during the next academic year. The new specialist attendance officer has been working throughout summer with identified children below 92% to ensure they are 'school ready' for September.

- Measure 2.15 % of care leavers who are NEET – of the 131 of care leavers making up the former relevant cohort of care leavers aged 19-21, currently 62 are recorded as NEET. However when you consider those engaged in positive activities or training/ re-engagement provision this reduces to 47 (36%).
- Measure 3.1 and 3.2 – cared for children in internal and external foster care - Ongoing pressures on internal provision and foster carer recruitment has meant that our use of external carers is higher than we would like. It is important to recognise however that 36% of these placements are long term matched placements offering security and stability for individuals.
- Measure 3.5 - % of cared for children with a plan for permanance endorsed at second review - Whilst there has been a drop in this quarter's figures, we continue to prioritise the identification of all potential options of permanency for children if they are not able to remain in the care of their parents. In doing this, at times, this can result in there being a delay in being able to confirm the plan of permanence. We do however consider this to be a valid delay when it results in a child being able to remain within their immediate or wider family network.
- Measure 4.2 - % of initial health assessments (IHA) completed by Paediatricians within 20 working days – We are aware that both the timeliness of IHA being requested and the quality of the request are causing this delay as it limits the information the paediatricians have available to them to complete the assessment. This has now formed a specific area for improvement which is being monitored through the 'Help me to be healthy' work stream. We have completed a briefing which has been sent to Administrators, Social Workers and Team Managers. In addition we have changed the Family Court request process to insure that the Court SWET (Social Work Evidence Template) document is sent with the request to improve the quality of the request. We have also changed the consent process, so that where the local authority has parental responsibility, the consent is being signed by the service to ensure that we remain in timescales

for families that are more difficult to engage. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and children who are 'Accommodated' under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 are a little more difficult as there is often limited supported document and Section 20 does not give the local authority a share of parental responsibility. We have introduced a weekly report which highlights whether a health assessment has or has not been requested. Whilst this is reactive as opposed to proactive, it will hopefully reduce the length of time that some are out of date.

#### **4. Pledge 1 - Being a Good Corporate Parent**

- 4.1. Consideration is being given to work of the priority 1 and priority 3 work streams as we have seen through the Operational Group that this work is beginning to duplicate across both work streams. We would envisage that both work streams will merge into one and continue to work on both priorities.
- 4.2. The work stream will then continue to focus on the following areas:
  - Training, support and direct work tools to be developed for social workers, foster carers and family around caring for teenagers and balancing safe risk taking and independence skills.
  - Embedding understanding of warning signs of placement instability to aid social workers in recognising signs of risk of placement instability, to ensure support can be offered in a timely manner to prevent a placement breakdown and unnecessary moves for children and young people. Whilst stability meetings have increased, at present the recognition of need for support and request for the meetings is not being progressed as rapidly as we would want.
  - Continuation of the use of trajectories with an aim of all children placed at home having a signs of safety trajectory and safety plan in place to aid discharge of the care order.
  - Mobility mapping for all care leavers to be developed to ensure that they have clear support networks outside of the social worker and personal assistant roles that can remain with them into adulthood.
  - SDQ working group to ensure that Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire resources are developed and that triangulation of views can be considered, to develop holistic picture of emotional health.
  - Targeted mentoring to be provided from Voice for Children for up to 5, 16 and 17 year olds, that do not yet have the experience and skills to manage semi supported living without additional support and are experience frequent placement breakdowns.

- Development of life story work and use of words and pictures to help children and young people understand their journey through care and aims for success.
- Corporate Parenting Induction Training will be established with a rolling pattern of focussed thematic training through the remainder of the year
- Corporate Parenting Basic Training will be established for all other elected members

## **5. Pledge 2 - Education, Employment and Employment Outcomes**

- 5.1. We are so proud of the A level results for our cared for young people this summer. One young person achieved the B, B, C grades that they needed to attend university studying photography. Another young person achieved B in English Literature, a D in Art and a D\* in their BTEC Applied Science and will be starting a degree in Architecture at a Russell Group University. They are both, quite rightly 'over the moon' with their achievements.
- 5.2. Both of these have been possible due to the hard work of these young people and the close working relationships between the children's social work teams and the Virtual School.

## **6. Pledge 3 - Achieving Permanence and Keeping Children Safe Being a Good Corporate Parent**

- 6.1. A detailed report on pledge 3 will be presented to the Committee in September.
- 6.2. In addition we have submitted a bid to the Department for Education to secure funding for the development of a 'Mockingbird' fostering programme that will work as part of our 'Bespoke' as we continue to review and develop our fostering services. We would particularly invite engagement and scrutiny through participation at our Fostering Development Board.

## **7. Pledge 4 – Health and Wellbeing**

- 7.1. Following the 'Help me to be healthy' group, the Cared for Children Specialist Nurses will now be regularly attending service meetings to provide an update for Social Workers around the health processes for cared for children. This will include discussion around the requirements for making a request for an initial health assessment, the role of the nurse specialists and how the health needs of cared for children are identified and met.

- 7.2. The Dental Adviser for NHS England has now been added to the escalation protocol which has recently been reviewed by the group.
- 7.3. Cared for children and care leavers have been added to the priority work stream for children living with mental health issues, which is a task and finish group within the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children partnership.

## **8. Pledge 5 – Preparing for Adulthood**

- 8.1. We have had a Care Leaver give birth to her second child, she is a great mother to both children and is not receiving any intervention. She has been able to provide them with positive parenting experiences following clear support and intervention for her.
- 8.2. One young person is completing her final year in her Social Work Degree at university and will be completing her final placement with Cheshire East Child in Need/ Child Protection Team. She will be a fantastic contributor to developing our family business. She continues to be a fantastic mother to her daughter balancing full time care and study.
- 8.3. A care leaver within the service has completed a work experience for a week in Italy working in a summer camp with children. She also volunteers every Saturday at a charity shop and is working really hard.

## **9. Implications**

### **9.1. Legal Implications**

- 9.1.1. Legal advice will be sought, as appropriate, upon all relevant emerging issues.

### **9.2. Financial Implications**

- 9.2.1. There are no direct financial implications of this report.

### **9.3. Human Resources Implications**

- 9.3.1. There are no direct human resource implications of this report.

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Ref		Polarity	Stat Neigh Av	National Av	Target	Yr. end 18-19	Qu 1 19-20	Qu 2 19-20	Qu 3 19-20	Qu 4 19-20	RAG	C&YP Plan Priority	Corporate Priority	
<b>General</b>														
G1	Number of cared for children				400-475	485	481					☹️	2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
G2	Rate per 10,000 cared for children		61	64		64	63					☹️	2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
G3	Number of care leavers					234	239					😊	2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
<b>Priority 1 - Being a Good Corporate Parent</b>														
P1.1	Number of eligible children and young people accessing advocacy services	High is Good					36					☹️	2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P1.2	% cared for children reviews in timescales	High is Good			97%	91%	93%					☹️	2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P1.3	% of children and young people involved in their reviews	High is Good				96%	98%					😊	2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
<b>Priority 2 - Improved Education, Employment and Training</b>														
P2.1	% of cared for children accessing 2-4 yr old provision (quarterly)	High is Good			90%	100%	100%					😊	5 Best Skills & Quals	Outcome 3
P2.2	Percentage of completed PEPs (Termly)	High is Good			90%		84%					☹️	5 Best Skills & Quals	Outcome 3
P2.3	% attendance at primary school of children in care (quarterly figure is all cared for children at month end rather than those in care for 12mths which are published figs)	High is Good			96%	92%	91%					☹️	5 Best Skills & Quals	Outcome 3
P2.4	% attendance at secondary school of children in care (quarterly figure is all cared for children at month end rather than those in care for 12mths which are published figs)	High is Good			96%	92%	91%					☹️	5 Best Skills & Quals	Outcome 3
P2.5	% of Primary pupils with less than 90% attendance (ytd)	Low is Good				7%	8%					☹️	5 Best Skills & Quals	Outcome 3
P2.6	% of Secondary pupils with less than 90% attendance (ytd)	Low is Good				24%	32%					☹️	5 Best Skills & Quals	Outcome 3
P2.7	Number of Permanent Exclusions 1/2 termly - Primary	Low is Good				0	0					😊	5 Best Skills & Quals	Outcome 3
P2.8	Number of Permanent Exclusions 1/2 termly - Secondary	Low is Good				0	0					😊	5 Best Skills & Quals	Outcome 3
P2.9	% of cared for children in good or outstanding schools	High is Good				82%	83%					😊	5 Best Skills & Quals	Outcome 3
P2.10	Number of children living in educational/ residential provision	Low is Good				9	10					☹️	5 Best Skills & Quals	Outcome 3
P2.11	% 16-18 year olds in Care that are NEET (monthly )	Low is Good				12%	13%					☹️	5 Best Skills & Quals	Outcome 3
P2.12	% 16-18 year old Care leavers that are NEET	Low is Good				30%	27%					☹️	5 Best Skills & Quals	Outcome 3

Ref		Polarity	Stat Neigh Av	National Av	Target	Yr. end 18-19	Qu 1 19-20	Qu 2 19-20	Qu 3 19-20	Qu 4 19-20	RAG	C&YP Plan Priority	Corporate Priority
P2.13	% of care leavers accessing Higher Education (University)	High is Good				10%	10%					4 Being Healthy and Making Positive Choices	Outcome 3
P2.14	Number of Cheshire East care leavers in apprenticeships (18+)	High is Good					8					4 Being Healthy and Making Positive Choices	Outcome 3
P2.15	% 19 - 21 year Care leavers NEET	Low is Good				39%	47%					5 Best Skills & Quails	Outcome 3
<b>Priority 3 - Achieving Permanence and Staying Safe</b>													
P3.1	Number of cared for children in internal foster care	High is Good				132	135					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P3.2	Number of cared for children in external foster care	Low is Good				133	140					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P3.3	Number of children and young people in residential care	Low is Good				33	30					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P3.4	% cared for children placed over 20 miles from home address (Cheshire East and out of borough)	Low is Good				26%	27%					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P3.5	% of cared for children with a plan for permanence endorsed at 2nd review	High is Good				74%	65%					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P3.6	Number of children who have achieved permanence in foster care	High is Good				99	102					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P3.8	Number of children that moved homes in the quarter	Low is Good					69					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P3.9	Number of stability meetings held	Low is Good					14					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P3.10	Number of children placed with parents					53	48					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P3.11	Number of children in care living with Friends & Family					62	58					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P3.12	% of children ceased to be looked after due to granting of special guardianship order (SGO) - year to date figure					30%	21%					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P3.13	Number of children with an adoption decision					43	38					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P3.14	% of children ceased to be looked after due to adoption - year to date figure	High is Good				12%	13%					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P3.15	% children who wait less than 14 months between entering care and moving in with adoptive family (This has changed to 14 months from 16 months)	High is Good				67%	44%					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P3.16	Average number of days between entering care and moving in with adoptive family (A1 national indicator)	Low is Good		558	426	339	328					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P3.17	Average number of days between placement order and match with adoptive family (A2 national indicator)	Low is Good		226	121	130	138					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5

Ref		Polarity	Stat Neigh Av	National Av	Target	Yr. end 18-19	Qu 1 19-20	Qu 2 19-20	Qu 3 19-20	Qu 4 19-20	RAG	C&YP Plan Priority	Corporate Priority
P3.18	Average number of days between entering care and moving in with adoptive family/ foster carer who becomes adoptive family	Low is Good			426	318	328					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P3.19	% of individuals aged 16-18 leaving care through independence						0%					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
<b>Priority 4 - Improve Health and Wellbeing Outcomes</b>													
P4.1	% of initial health assessments requested within 48 hours of coming into care	High is Good				70%	68%					4 Being Healthy and Making Positive Choices	Outcome 5
P4.2	% of initial health assessments completed by paediatricians within 20 working days	High is Good				67%	53%					4 Being Healthy and Making Positive Choices	Outcome 5
P4.3	% of review health assessments completed (ytd fig)	High is Good				91%	85%					4 Being Healthy and Making Positive Choices	Outcome 5
P4.4	Number of care leavers with a health passport	High is Good					80%					4 Being Healthy and Making Positive Choices	Outcome 5
P4.5	Number of pregnant care leavers (eligible, relevant and former relevant) 16+	Low is Good				5	4					4 Being Healthy and Making Positive Choices	Outcome 5
P4.6	% of young people with a SDQ score of 20 or above	Low is Good				26%	27%					4 Being Healthy and Making Positive Choices	Outcome 5
P4.7	Number of young people where we have undertaken an emotional wellbeing screening tool						11					4 Being Healthy and Making Positive Choices	Outcome 5
P4.8	Number of cared for children that went missing 5 times or more (quarterly figure is 5 or more times in that quarter)	Low is Good				32	11					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
<b>Priority 5 - Preparing for Adulthood</b>													
P5.1	Number/ % of care leavers with an up to date pathway plan	High is Good				98%						2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P5.2	% of care leavers in suitable accommodation	High is Good				96%	96%					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P5.3	The number of young people with a CSE plan - All Individuals					9	12					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P5.4	%/ number of individuals aged 16-18 that return home to parents (ytd)					14%	33%					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P5.5	Number of individuals in staying put arrangement					12	13					2 Feel & Be Safe	Outcome 5
P5.6	Number of individual offences committed by cared for children	Low is Good				63	5					4 Being Healthy and Making Positive Choices	Outcome 1
P5.7	Number of cared for children offending	Low is Good					3					4 Being Healthy and Making Positive Choices	Outcome 1

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