

Corporate Parenting Committee

Agenda

Date: Tuesday, 12th November, 2019
Time: 4.00 pm
Venue: Committee Suite 1, 2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road,
Sandbach CW11 1HZ

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 17 September 2019.

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

To receive a verbal update from members of the Committee.

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

To receive an update on participation with children and young people.

6. **Virtual Headteacher's Annual Report (Deep dive on Pledge 2 - Improve education, employment & training)** (Pages 9 - 54)

To consider the Virtual Headteacher's Annual Report.

Contact: Julie Zientek
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E-Mail: julie.zientek@cheshireeast.gov.uk

7. **Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2018-19** (Pages 55 - 86)

To consider the IRO Annual Report for 2018-19.

8. **Unregulated Placement Provision** (Pages 87 - 96)

To consider a report on unregulated placement provision.

9. **Corporate Parenting Update Report** (Pages 97 - 112)

To consider the update report.

THERE ARE NO PART 2 ITEMS

Membership: Councillors D Flude (Chairman), J Saunders (Vice-Chairman), R Bailey, J Barber, M Beanland, J Buckley, C Bulman, P Butterill, S Edgar, K Flavell, S Holland and M Warren

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Committee**
held on Tuesday, 17th September, 2019 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor J Saunders (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair)

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

Officers in attendance

Gill Betton, Head of Service: Children's Development and Partnerships
Dave Leadbetter, Head of Children's Commissioning
Keith Martin, Head of Service: Cared for Children & Care Leavers
Sue Preston, Service Manager: The Children's Society Children's Rights Project
Laura Rogerson, Headteacher, Virtual School for Cared for Children
Jacquie Sims, Director of Children's Social Care
Kayleigh Wilshaw, Service Manager: Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Julie Zientek, Democratic Services Officer

16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Bailey and D
Flude.

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

18 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2019 be
approved as a correct record.

19 CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE FROM ELECTED MEMBERS

The Vice-Chairman reported that she and the Chairman had been to the
Children's Conference, which was very well attended.

There was nothing to report from the work streams this time. Officers
would be producing a proposal, including a calendar of events, and
delivering further training. Committee members would also be DBS
checked. In addition, a template would be circulated to enable Members
to update the pen profiles which outlined their interests, and which were
appreciated by the young people.

20 UPDATE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Acting Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers reported that he had met with My Voice, the children in care council, the previous week. The children and young people were looking forward to the Star awards event, which was taking place at Tatton Park on Sunday 24 November.

21 FOSTERING PANEL ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the Annual Report of the Fostering Panel for 2018-19, presented by the Acting Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers.

The recruitment of foster carers was a significant national issue. Cheshire East Council was a member of Foster4, a collaborative project which recruited foster carers on behalf of the four Cheshire Local Authorities. However, there was a need for a 10 – 15% increase in foster carers in Cheshire East in the next 3 – 4 years. It was intended to undertake a review of fostering services, including the next steps and support for foster carers.

In response to questions from Members, it was reported that:

- 'Mockingbird' was being developed to provide more support to foster carers, with a foster carer in the middle of a hub supporting 6 – 8 others. A social worker had recently been recruited, to provide stability.
- Cheshire East Fostering Panel members undertook training during the year.
- There was currently no Elected Member on the Fostering Panel.
- The membership of the Fostering Panel included a foster carer, and the number of social workers on the Panel had increased.

RESOLVED - That the report and its conclusions be noted.

22 CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

Consideration was given to the Annual Report of the Committee for 2018-19, which highlighted progress and achievements, and set out priorities for the forthcoming year.

The Committee also considered a proposed amended version of its Terms of Reference, which had been discussed at the Committee's last meeting, on 18 June 2019.

During the discussion and in response to points raised by the Committee it was reported that:

- An elected Member was to be sought for the proposed governing body for the Virtual School. Officers would send Members details of the requirements and level of commitment, and request expressions of interest.
- The Acting Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers would report to the next meeting regarding the use of leisure centres by cared for children.

RESOLVED

That

- (a) the Annual Report of the Corporate Parenting Committee for 2018-19 be noted.
- (b) Cabinet be recommended to receive the Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Report for 2018-19 and approve the amended Terms of Reference subject to an amendment to include 'visits' in paragraph 4.

23 CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE AND SCORECARD

The Committee considered a report providing an update on national and local developments in relation to cared for children and young people and care leavers. The report aligned with the pledges of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

With regard to the Quarter 1 Corporate Parenting Scorecard, the report detailed areas of concern and what was being done to address them. The Acting Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers agreed that further information relating to the meaning of each column could be included next time.

During the discussion and in response to points raised by the Committee it was reported that:

- In relation to Pledge 2 (Education, Employment and Employment Outcomes), 7 cared for young people were now going to university, 1 to an apprenticeship and one was starting work.
- Support was provided during university vacations by maintaining foster placements, arranging other placements or by securing accommodation at universities. Support would also be provided for those continuing in higher education.

- In relation to Pledge 3 (Achieving Permanence and Keeping Children Safe Being a Good Corporate Parent), delays in being able to confirm a plan of permanence could be the result of extended care proceedings.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

24 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.

25 CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the Cheshire East Children's Rights Service Annual Report for 2018, which provided an overview of the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service delivered by the Children's Society for Cheshire East.

During the discussion and in response to points raised by the Committee it was reported that:

- Corporate parents could not be Independent Visitors.
- Independent Visitors and young people were introduced at a match meeting, but they did not have to continue if they did not get on.
- Training and support were offered for volunteers.
- In cases where communication had broken down in a placement, an advocate would liaise with the young person.
- There was training and support available for social workers, and the Children's Society had been training social workers on children's rights

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

26 FOCUS REPORT ON PERMANENCY AND KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE (PLEDGE THREE)

The Committee considered a report providing an update on progress, impact and developments in relation to Pledge Three of the Corporate

Parenting Strategy ('We will work to achieve permanence and keep children safe').

Members noted that:

- The number of Cared for Children had increased, but there had also been an increase in the number of discharges.
- Ignition Panel enabled young people to talk about what they wanted in terms of housing and support.
- With regard to foster care, 36 young people had been matched on a long term basis.
- A stability practice lead had been recruited, and foster carers attended stability meetings, of which there had been 16 during the quarter.
- There had been a focus on criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation, and a strategic approach was being developed.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and concluded at 5.55 pm

Councillor J Saunders (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair)

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Working for a brighter future together

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 12 November 2019

Report Title: Virtual Headteacher Annual Report

Senior Officer: Mark Palethorpe, Acting Executive Director of People

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. The Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out five pledges to our cared for children and care leavers. Over the year, the Corporate Parenting Committee focuses on each one of the five pledges.
- 1.2. Pledge Two of the Strategy is that 'We will improve education, employment and employment outcomes'. This report updates the Committee on progress, impact and developments in relation to this pledge.

2. Recommendation/s

- 2.1. Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to:

- 2.1.1. Endorse the Virtual Headteacher's Annual Report.

3. Reasons for Recommendation/s

- 3.1. The Corporate Parenting Committee is an advisory group to the Cabinet and, as such, needs to be aware of any national or local issues that are likely to impact on cared for children and care leavers. The Corporate Parenting Committee needs to be able to scrutinise and challenge performance to improve outcomes for cared for children and young people.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. None; this is an annual report.

5. Background

- 5.1. We are currently corporate parents to 517 cared for children. 319 of these are school aged cared for children from Reception to Year 11.
- 5.2. The role of the Virtual School is clearly defined in *Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children statutory guidance for local authorities, 2018*.
- 5.3. This report presents an overview of the operation and impact of the Virtual School during 2018-19. The Virtual School supports all children in care and relevant care leavers regardless of their length of time in care but the educational attainment data in the report relates to those who have been in continuous care from March 31st 2018 to March 31st 2019.
- 5.4. There are also a higher number of children with high level of Special Educational Needs (SEN), which means that the overall population is more complex as well as larger in number than last academic year.
- 5.5. All children have access to additional Pupil Premium funding to put in place actions and interventions which are additional to the normal school support and which will help them achieve targets.

5.6. Legal Implications

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

5.7. Finance Implications

- 5.7.1. An increase in the number of cared for children does have an financial impact on the resources and capacity of the Council.

5.8. Policy Implications

- 5.8.1. There are no direct policy implications of this report.

5.9. Equality Implications

- 5.9.1. There are no direct equality implications of this report.

5.10. Human Resources Implications

- 5.10.1. There are no direct human resources of this report.

5.11. Risk Management Implications

5.11.1. Cared for children and care leavers are a vulnerable group that are at risk of a number of factors – poor education and training, health, safeguarding and transition into adulthood.

5.12. Rural Communities Implications

5.12.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

5.13. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

5.13.1. The contents of this report have implications for cared for children and care leavers, who are some of Cheshire East's most vulnerable children.

5.14. Public Health Implications

5.14.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

6. Ward Members Affected

6.1. Although the number of Cheshire East cared for children and young people is relatively small, they are a vulnerable cohort who live across Cheshire East and in other local authority areas

7. Consultation & Engagement

7.1. None.

8. Access to Information

8.1. None.

9. Contact Information

9.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

Name: Laura Rogerson

Job Title: Virtual School Headteacher

Email: laura.rogerson@cheshireeast.gov.uk

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Virtual School for Cared for Children Headteacher's Annual Report 2018-19



Laura Rogerson
Head teacher
Virtual School for Cared for Children

Cheshire East Council
September 2019 (*provisional data not yet validated)

Introduction

The role of the Virtual School is clearly defined in *Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children statutory guidance for local authorities 2018*.

This report presents an overview of the operation and impact of the Virtual School during 2018-2019. The Virtual School (VS) supports all children in care and relevant care leavers regardless of their length of time in care but the educational attainment data in the report relates to those who have been in continuous care from March 31st 2018 to March 31st 2019. This is the cohort reported in national data which is supplied to external agencies such as Ofsted. National comparative data, where quoted, is that published in Nexus and the Statistical First Release of the Outcomes of looked after children

During 2018/19 the Virtual School has continued to support all cared for children and to continually review its operation to ensure it is meeting its statutory duties while providing effective support. This is delivered by an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), primary, secondary and post 16 team.

The overall number of children has continued to rise; this increase is on average that experienced elsewhere. There are also a higher number of children with high level of Special Educational Needs (SEN), which means that the overall population is more complex as well as larger in number.

Cared for Children are making good progress overall in comparison to both National and previous years data. In order to continue to improve outcomes targeted support is needed to challenge some secondary/independent schools where Cared for Children are underperforming.

Cared for children involved with youth offending have significantly higher levels of SEN. An advisor also works part time for the Youth Justice Service and oversees these cases. She is currently reviewing the support mechanisms to increase attendance at the end of the orders.

The make-up, operation and funding of the Virtual School has been reviewed. There has been an increase in core staffing to include a specialist attendance officer to support increasing overall attendance of all Cared for Children and reduce persistent absence during 2019/20 academic year. Some core staffing is now funded through the Pupil Premium. The impact of these changes is currently being monitored.

All children have access to additional Pupil Premium funding to put in place actions and interventions which are additional to the normal school support and which will help them achieve targets. In April 2017 a new system was introduced whereby schools request funding to carry out specific interventions. This has ensured accountability and allows the impact to be monitored through individual PEP meetings each term.

Attendance at both primary and secondary has slightly decreased this year with the average primary attendance falling from 95% to 90% and the average secondary attendance falling from 93% to 90%. We have identified this as an area of need and addressed this by employing a specialist attendance officer to support through academic year 2019/20 and this will be reviewed for impact. In total last academic year there were 147 individual exclusions which equated to 230.5 lost days overall.

The Virtual School has a duty to work with Head teachers to try and avoid excluding a Cared for Child and to make sure that they have the support in place to thrive and make progress. In the case of repeat exclusions, additional PEPs will be held to check that all necessary support is being given. There have not been any cases of a permanent exclusion in 2018/19.

The Virtual School has commissioned places at the Fermain Academy Alternative Provision in Macclesfield and this has contributed to the reduction in repeat exclusions and total number of sessions lost. The use of good quality alternative provision (AP) has increased and has had good outcomes for children who have previously been unable to sustain or access full time mainstream school. The Virtual School are further supporting having champions within Fermain and Cornerstones (our primary assessment provision), we will be supporting to fund a Teaching Assistant (TA) within each provision who will have sole oversight of Cared for Children to offer 1-1 support, we will be offering regular CPD for staff.

The Virtual School works closely with other services within the local authority: Social Care, SEN, School Admissions, Medical Needs, Attendance and Youth Support. In some cases this is through panels and meeting groups such as the 16+ NEET challenge panel or Resource and Accommodation panel meetings but is often through joint working and collaboration of individual staff. As a result of these collaborations policies and procedures have been revised to become more efficient. The Virtual School has delivered cross service training on how all services can support improving the education outcomes of cared for children. Other services have delivered training sessions alongside the Virtual School at Designated Lead training days.

In order to support schools with significant updates and information, North-West Virtual School Heads coordinated two conferences. This was attended by over 100 school representatives with DFE, Ofsted, Adoption UK and NAVSH chair present as key note speakers.

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1. Self Evaluation

Area	Self Evaluation		Priority actions for 18-19
Foundation Stage			Early intense intervention for children below targets
Key Stage 1			Monitor progress and ensure early intervention
Key Stage 2			Identify and have support for children working below targets
Key Stage 4			Challenge schools where pupils under-perform, work alongside social care to reduce school moves during KS4
Post-16			Reduce NEET Cygnet and tutor and targeted support
Higher Education			Improve access to tasters and promote HE to Y10, work alongside skills and growth (careers)
Outcomes for cfc engaged with YOT			Align PEPs with YOT documents. Confirm long term plan for YOT education support.
SEN			Introduce an SEN lead with VS team to develop a tracking document to monitor assessments and support and attend panel meetings
Admissions			Agreed policy to support admissions, especially SEN
Attendance			Rapid response to falling attendance, including SEN, students below 90% and those on part-time timetables
Exclusions			Sustain the reduced number of repeat exclusions, especially SEN. Work alongside NWVSH to create a regional guide to support a consistent approach to reducing exclusions
Leadership and Management			Monitor staff capacity/wellbeing as numbers increase. Review working in line with new DfE stat. guidance
Staff Training			Continue to increase attachment awareness in high schools through full staff training
Finance			Monitor new funding plan and impact of support
PEPs			Continue to see increase in quality of returned PEPs with all primary and secondary on ePEPs by June 2020
Changes in school placement and AP			Increase challenge and monitoring of pupils in AP – attendance, attainment, progress and exclusions
Partnership Working			Establish agreed protocols for SEN and admissions. Work with S Care to increase engagement of F Carers
Monitoring and Evaluation			Increase detail and quality of data of monitoring data and use to priorities actions, to review termly assessment data from schools
Participation by children and young people			Review revised My Voice (new design in line with SOS)
Safeguarding and promotion of wellbeing			Continue to work closely with all services including Health, Social care, Schools and SEN

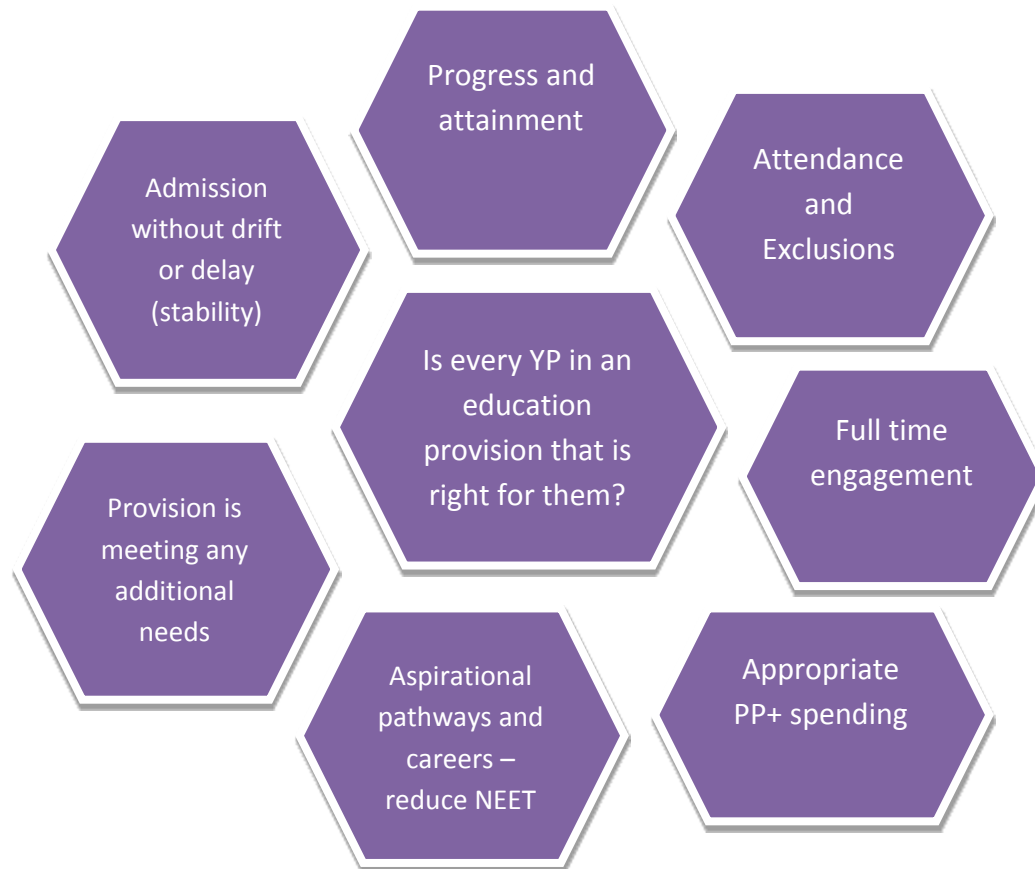
Green = Area doing well

Amber = further work needed

Red = High priority for action

Ensuring all children and young people in care are in an education provision that is right for them

Key focus areas



2. Remit and operation of the Virtual School in Cheshire East

Local authorities have a duty under the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child looked after by them. This includes a particular duty to promote the child's education achievement, wherever they live or are educated. The authority must therefore give particular attention to the educational implications of any decision about the welfare of those children. The local authority is required to appoint a Virtual School Headteacher (VSH) for the purpose of discharging the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children, wherever they live or are educated.

The maxim of the Cheshire East Virtual School is to "Engage, Achieve and Progress". The Virtual School operates in such a way as to follow the Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities in the document "Promoting the education of looked after children" (DfE, Feb 2018). This requires the local authority to ensure that there are systems in place which promote good education provision for cared for children and to monitor that these are in place. In Cheshire East this duty is taken further by ensuring that every young person in care has a named Virtual School Advisor linked to their case can provide challenge support to schools, carers and social workers. This in turn helps to ensure that there is suitable education in place, champion the needs of the child

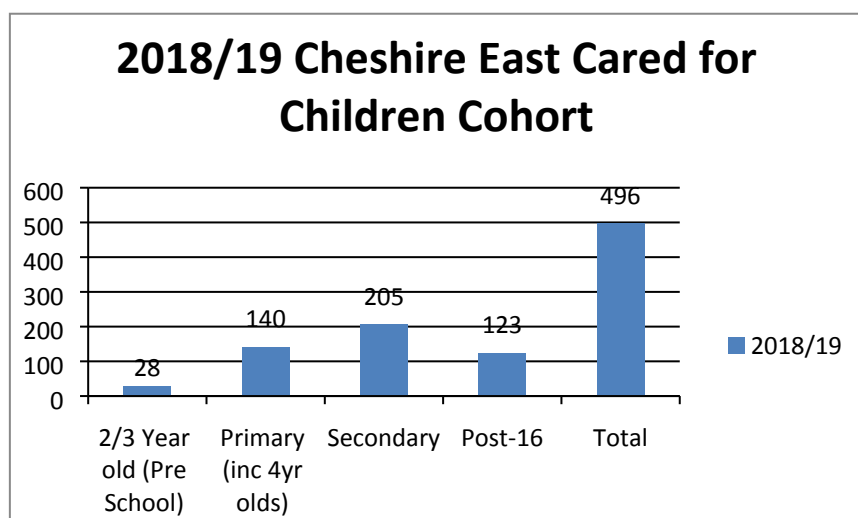
and challenge and support education providers to ensure that they make suitable arrangements to allow the child to reach their full potential. This is carried out through termly PEP (Personal Education Plan) meetings with additional meetings and activities put into place for those with the highest level of need. The service is provided to all children in care up to the end of the school year in which they become 18 and is available to older young people on request.

During Ofsted's focused inspection of children's services visit to Cheshire East at the end of October inspectors stated:

- Children are well-supported with their education through the Virtual Schools Team
- When children's placements change, the head of the virtual school has proactively secured funding and appropriate education placements for children. This ensures that children, including those in placements out of the local area, have continuity of provision.

3. School Roll

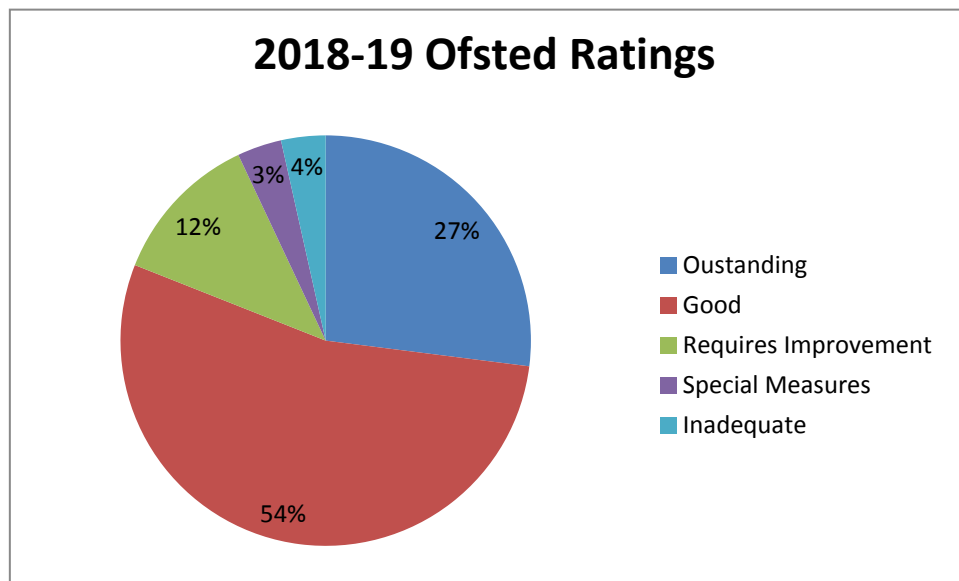
At the end of the 2018/19 academic year there were 496 Cared for Children on Cheshire East Virtual School roll this was an increase from 466 recorded for the same time 17/18, of these 382 were of school age. Cheshire East Cared for Children from Reception to Year 11 attended 166 different schools in 37 different Local Authorities. Of these 26% attended Cheshire East schools. 73% of our children attend schools in the North West.



4. Ofsted Ratings

The statutory guidance states that schools judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' or 'Outstanding' should be prioritised for Cared for children. If any Cheshire East child is placed in a school rated below 'Good' then Virtual School Advisors will visit every school prior to any child being placed to ensure that pastoral and curriculum support is of a good standard. Advisors attend PEPs and track progress at regular intervals throughout the year of all children in schools graded below Good, to ensure that children are making progress. Risk assessments are completed immediately when schools grades are moved below Good following Ofsted inspection to ensure that the needs of the child are being met.

The chart below shows the proportion of pupils attending schools with identified Ofsted ratings:



5. Special Educational Needs

At the end of academic year 2018/19 there were 146 children with identified SEND needs 37% of Reception to Year 11 cohort. Of these 85 had an EHCP, and 56 with either School Support or a School Focus Plan. There are a further 34 Post-16 learners with EHCPs which equates to 27% of Post-16 cohort.

The Virtual School has an identified SEN lead advisor who meets with the cared for lead person from the SEND team every 2 weeks. This is to review cases to ensure effective and timeliness interventions are in place, plans are finalised and advice received. The primary focus is to ensure that school moves between schools are timely and well planned. This is particularly important if school moves are out of county.

There is also a focus on children where Needs Assessments are being granted and to ensure that plans are formed quickly for children and can therefore access specialist support. This has been in place since August 2018 and already consistency and collaborative working across teams has shown improvement. A tracking document is in place to store and monitor information and this is reviewed and updated following each meeting. A checklist has been created to ensure that protocols are procedures are clear and in place for individual children. The Virtual School Head teacher attends

SEND panel every 2 weeks. As best practise we recommend that PEPs and Annual Reviews are held together within schools.

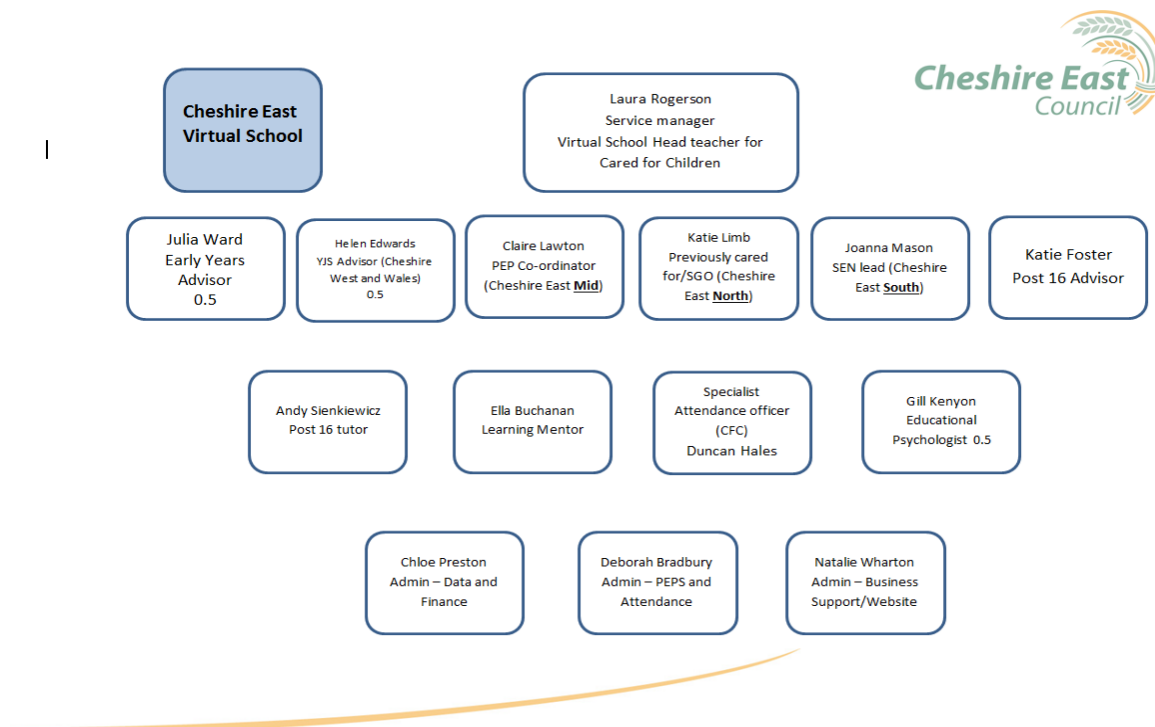
The Virtual School established links with SEN teams in all areas to ensure that children are in the correct school and making progress as quickly as possible. Advisors are involved if an application for a needs assessment is made and will be contacted by the SEN team to request any contextual data which may impact on the decision. If a child has a plan then school are asked to review the EHCP at a PEP meeting so that the EHCP targets can be reflected in the PEP although these are not the same as the PEP actions are usually quite short/medium term and specific while the EHCP outcomes are more generalised or long term.

If a school or carer feel that needs are not being met, the Virtual School will work with school to ensure that due process is followed and all necessary documents are submitted to the relevant SEN team. There can be a delay when finding a new school for an SEN Child, particularly if placed out of Cheshire East while consultations take place and funding agreements are made. Protocols and procedures are now in place to address this.

For SEN cases the following additional support mechanisms were agreed and implemented

- Virtual School to inform SEN of planned moves for cared for children at the earliest point
- Advisors to provide summary of history to be included in consultation documents
- Virtual School head teacher supports the consultation process at each stage to ensure this is sent and responded to in timely manner to ensure there is no drift or delay
- Advisors to provide names of possible schools for consultation as well as those identified by SEN
- Advisor will support visits/observations and communication with potential schools
- Child not to be placed in school without agreement of Virtual School
- Named SEN worker assigned to oversee cases of cared for children
- Guidelines for other councils produced to speed up process of finding schools for children living outside Cheshire East
- Liaison with SEN staff on how to record needs of children not attending or frequently changing schools
- Virtual School to put in place tuition/provision while awaiting a new school place to support ongoing learning and stability within placement

(Staffing structure 2019-20)



6. Staffing and Organisation

The make-up and nature of the Virtual School Team is kept under review to ensure that the skills available match the needs of the cohort. During this academic year school age advisors will be working in localities to facilitate improved support to schools and develop working groups within locality areas to develop training and share best practise.

The team has evolved to provide more direct contact with children and young people so that the support can be more closely tailored to needs and monitored. Tuition is made available to young people to provide additional after school sessions to help prepare for exams or when pupils are between schools by use of agency staff if schools cannot provide the tutor. The Learning Mentor has been employed to work with children in school with SEMH or high levels of anxiety or are at risk of exclusion and who require support in addition to that which the school can provide, the learning mentor can offer targeted support within a range of specialist areas also supporting to empower and train school staff to support children.

The amount of support available from the Education Psychology Service has increased from 2016 and will be reviewed further to see if this is sufficient to give advice and support to schools around children with challenging or complex behaviour.

Monthly staff supervisions are arranged for all staff to discuss their own wellbeing and workload and also to raise any cases that need input from the Virtual School Head teacher (VSH). In addition there are regular team meetings, where the team can receive updates from Senior Managers and the performance of the team can be discussed. All staff are invited to identify training needs which will

allow them to be more effective in their role or any specific area of interest. In addition to this the Virtual School Head teacher meets with advisors every 3 weeks to review Attendance, Attainment, Exclusions and Children causing concern to allow for swift intervention at all stages.

During 2018/19 all staff have been offered courses on attachment and signs of safety, all attended development days and all staff have been offered access to Mental Health First Aiders within the council to support their own emotional wellbeing. All staff have access to all council training including our learning lounge with a range of online courses such as GDPR to support their own professional development.

The VSH is a member of the NWVSH group and also of the National Association of VSH, (NAVSH) and through this network the Virtual School is able to keep abreast of current developments such as new guides for previously looked after, adopted and special guardianship children. This group are working together to develop a range of regional guides.

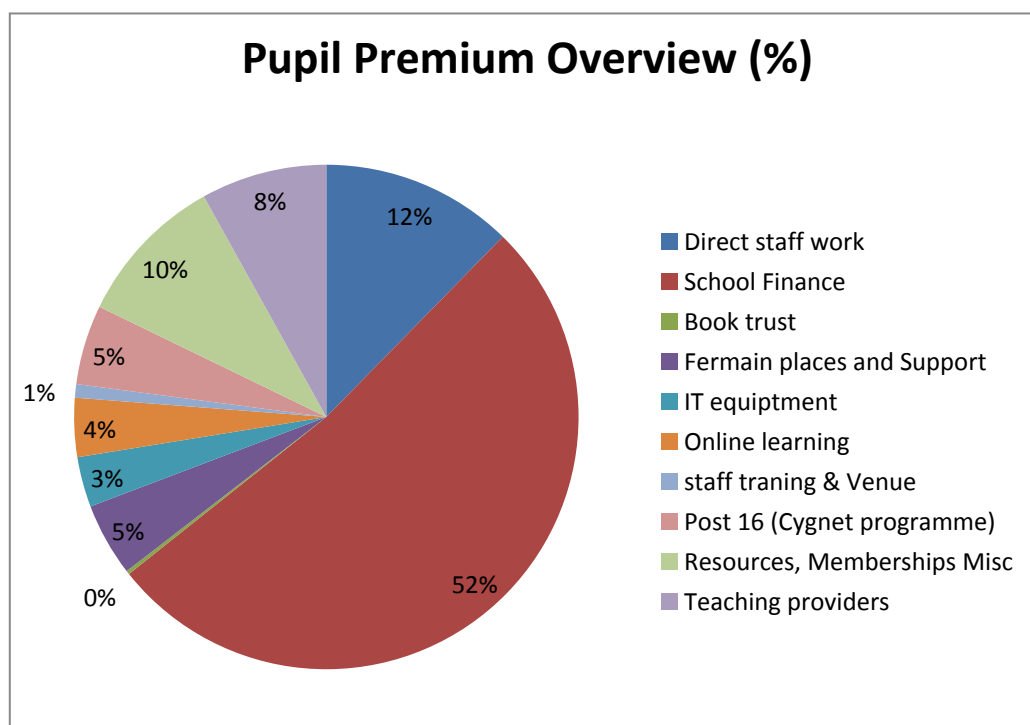
The VSH has regular supervision with the Head of Service for Pupil Participation and completes a monthly scorecard for the Director of Education and Skills as a means to monitor progress. This gives a detailed breakdown of the performance of the VS and key indicators are extracted to be included on the Corporate Parent Scorecard.

The team are a very highly motivated and committed group of professionals who always act in the best interests of the child. During 2018/19 there has been a very low level of absence amongst the team with no long term sickness or stress. The Virtual School Headteacher uses the behaviours toolkit effectively to support 'conversations' and team meetings/activities.



7. Funding

The Virtual School's main budget is the Pupil Premium Plus which is devolved to the Local Authority and is to be used as seen appropriate by the VSH as to best promote achievement and progress. The amount which is made available to the LA is £1900 per child in care as reported on the March return but the guidance makes clear that while it is expected that the majority of this is used for direct support of children, it does not need to be allocated equally as some children will need less than £1900 and some will need considerably more. The funding criteria also states that the Pupil Premium can be used to fund staff or central services such as training as long as they have a direct impact on improving the experience and outcomes for children.



The main use of Pupil Premium was to fund 1:1 or small group teaching, support to enhance social and emotional skills and purchase of specific resources. The remaining funds have been used to provide high cost support for children with particular needs. These include; attending high cost alternative provision for children without SEN who cannot manage mainstream school, providing a series of off-site support such as animal therapy or forest schools, having a weekly work placement to add variety and help prepare for the world or work or funding specialist support such as bereavement counselling. Significant funds were also allocated to schools and children to prepare for exams or to prepare for transition. In almost all cases this helped children to increase their skills and knowledge before the exams but always improved their preparation and confidence. In 2018/19 the total amount received was £890,100.

All school age children in care were allocated Pupil Premium (PP) once the PEP was returned to describe how this would be spent and in some cases funding was allocated to children outside this age range if the need was evident. For example a nursery child with the need for additional speech and language support or a post-16 young person not in education who wished to take up a work

placement to gain skills and confidence. Some school age children did not have a basic allocation if the school felt it had all the resources needed, such as an independent special school which already receives a high level of funding or if the Virtual school was arranging and funding provision such as tuition or off-site learning. In most cases funding is transferred to the school but in some cases funding is used centrally, for example purchase of laptops and book parcels for young children to encourage love of reading and improving literacy. Although the funding formula is based on the number of school age children, requests for children in pre-school or post-16 are also considered. We have funded speech and language intervention within a number of our pre-school nurseries following analysis of our attainment which clearly shown this was an area of need within our younger children.

The virtual school has purchased starting school packs/bags for all children:

- Starting school
- Starting year 7
- Starting Year 11 exam packs
- Starting college exam packs

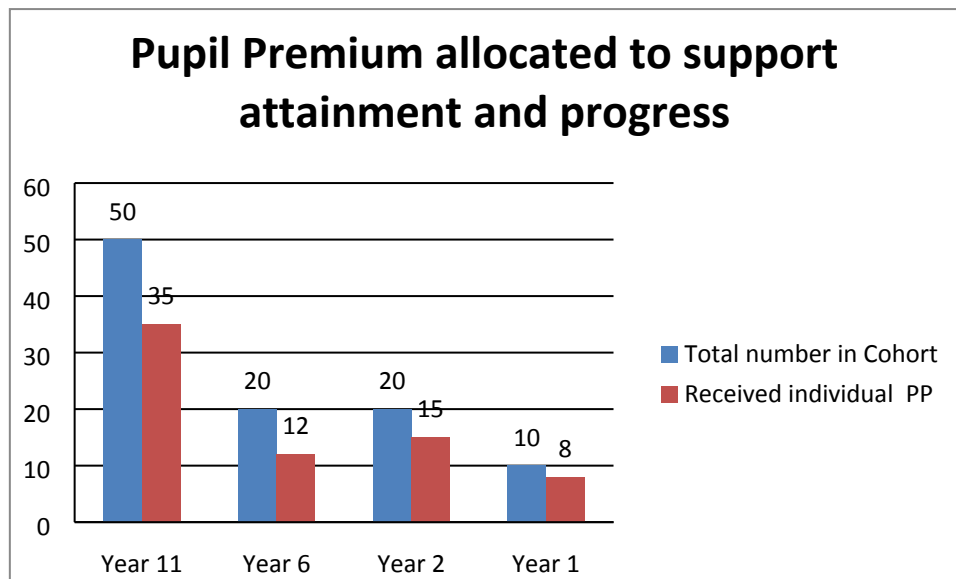
We have received some positive feedback from schools and children on the supply and purchase of these bags.

"I just wanted to say thank you for the bags which Virtual School gave to our 2 Cared for Children. Their little faces lit up when I handed them over this afternoon and it was the first thing they showed their dad when he collected them after school tonight. Something so simple but very kind made two little boys very happy! (Primary school designated lead)

The Virtual School have also supported children to access recreational activities where they would not normally have access such as: Horse riding, Music lessons such as Flute, Piano and Guitar, Swimming therapy, Pony camp and Drama/Acting lessons.

The Virtual School also has an additional budget to fund the Cygnet programme for post 16 to support to reduce NEET figures.

In April 2017, a system was introduced which moved away from a standard allocation but asks schools to give a spending plan for each child. All requests are then considered by the advisor and the Virtual School Head teacher and funding allocated accordingly. The average amount paid per child was almost £1650 and the most frequent support requests were for 1:1 sessions to focus on social and emotional support such as nurture sessions, play/bereavement therapy or meet/greet/review sessions. Funding was also requested when children were at risk of exclusion and this was used to provide additional support or fund alternative provision/off site provision. Funding was made available to schools when a new child joined (following a placement move) so that they could implement an integration plan which involved having regular review and observations to identify any areas of need. In total, requests were received and funding allocated for 260 children and 75 were given laptops



Impact of Pupil Premium

Monitoring systems within the virtual school mean that the impact of Pupil Premium can be observed, although it should be recognised that cared for children are subject to so many changes, such as placement moves or changes in contact arrangements that it is difficult to draw any absolute causal links. PEPs have been adapted this year and now include a section to review each target linked to funding specifically. Within every PEP schools are requested to review and show clear impact of funding allocated. This allows us to monitor interventions and support each term for individual children.

Case Study – Impact of PP

Student A attended a mainstream school and from the start of year 10 quickly disengaged. He was placed in residential care and over the course of the first term of year 10 had attendance below 20%. Various interventions were tried including one to one tutoring, a reduced timetable, online learning and a course at a local college but with no impact and attendance continued to decrease. The Virtual School then sourced a placement at a new provision at the RSPCA that we had not used before designed for Key Stage 4. This was really positive and ended up in the student having a placement one day a week as part of a bespoke timetable. He was placed in an alternative provision in Stoke where his attendance started to pick up very slowly but was still around 40%. A meeting was held and the student informed that he would need to fully engage in school in order to continue with the placement. This had an effect as the placement was so successful. The VS paid using PP+ for a full year at both the AP and the RSPCA. He started to engage in school and consider his longer term aspirations of either becoming an RSPCA warden or dog handler. He also attended events at the RSPCA at the weekend. He completed year 11 in July 2019 sitting 5 GCSEs. Following leaving school he continued to work in his own time at the RSPCA and was successful in gaining a traineeship starting Sept 2019 which has been arranged through the Virtual School directly with RSPCA. He is making exceptional progress and also completing English and Maths each week at the centre with one of the Virtual school tutors. He is due to be offered a full time two year apprenticeship following the traineeship

The PEP is the document which records the children's education provision, achievements and how the school or other provider will help to improve their outcomes. It is the joint responsibility of the local authority and school to ensure that there are PEPs in place and the Virtual School has the duty to monitor these and provide advice and support as necessary. The PEP should be reviewed each term at a meeting between school, carers and social workers. The Virtual School attends all initial PEPs for children and young people between the ages of two and eighteen years old.

While the PEP document is mainly to support children of school age, Cheshire East also provides a similar service to children of pre-school age and those between 16-18 who are included in the Raising of the Participation Age cohort, (school years 12 and 13) although advice and support is available in request to children under 2 and young people in care or care leavers over 18.

The completion rate of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) has risen to over 90% as has the percentage completed to a good or better standard this is due to the robust quality assurance process that is in place within the Virtual School team and training offered to schools through the Designated Lead teachers network events which allows staff in all schools to access practical working sessions to look at outstanding PEPs to allow self-evaluation and development of their own systems. The Virtual School developed and trailed an ePEP during academic year 2017/18 with 7 schools across Cheshire East which will reduce the paperwork and time needed for the PEP process without any loss of quality. Following a trial period this has deemed to be successful by schools and we have now rolled this out to all Primary and Secondary Schools. We have continued to develop the ePEP following feedback from trial schools to further enhance the quality and content of the PEP. During this academic year we are further developing to introduce a new ePEP design for early years and post 16 providers.

Within Cheshire East the Virtual School takes an active role in the PEP process and the cases of all the children which means that prompt action can be taken when issues arise that require specialist education input. Since 2017 the system for checking and loading of PEPs have been simplified using Liquid Logic, as a result of this there has been a significant improvement in the number of cases where the initial PEP is fully completed and loaded within 20 days, with an average rate of completion of 18.5 days overall.

Virtual schools attend all initial PEP meetings and complete the first PEP which will provide a template and standard for future PEPs. This includes ensuring actions and targets are specific and measurable. These PEPs should be held within 20 working days and be available for the first cared for review meeting. The Virtual School also takes responsibility for ensuring that PEP is provided to the Social Worker in readiness for the initial review. PEPs are reviewed each term with the education provider taking a lead in these by reviewing the impact of the previous actions, update the PEP and return to the Virtual School. Support and training is available to assist schools, settings or colleges with the PEP process. There is a robust Quality Assurance process in place within the Virtual School team where each case is reviewed to establish its support needs. Those with the highest support needs are rated as RED, in which case the advisor will attend all PEPs and probably have more frequent contact with the child, carer, school and Social Worker. Cases rated as AMBER have slightly less contact with the advisor whilst those rated as GREEN are monitored with attendance at one PEP

per year. Virtual School are unable to attend all PEP meetings, therefore the criteria for Virtual School involvement is:

- New into care
- School or placement move
- Moved out of Borough
- Red rated cases
- Repeat exclusions
- Attendance below 90%
- Need for independent chair

This year there has been a drive to ensure that all PEPs are completed and loaded onto the child's case with a particular focus on those of school age where it is important to monitor progress. PEPs are deemed unsatisfactory if key information is not provided or if a previous PEP has been amended and it is unclear if information refers to the current or previous PEP. Most PEPs rated as satisfactory are giving this grade because interventions are not specific or because the intended outcomes are not expressed in ways which can be evaluated.

Although the Virtual School Advisor does not attend all PEP meetings, they often do so for the more complex cases and in these situations can be a crucial and consistent link for the child. For example when a child is awaiting a new school or cannot attend school due to mental health issues the advisor will visit the child at home and make sure they have access to some tuition and learning and that this, where possible, includes a chance to include some social interaction.

The quality of the PEP is the joint responsibility of the local authority that looked after the child and the school. Social workers, carers, VSHs, Designated Teachers and, as appropriate, other relevant professionals will need to work closely together. Social Workers have been asked to prioritise attendance at PEP meetings so that they gain essential information about their child, the Virtual School headteacher has attended and led workshop sessions during social workers development day to give clear guidance on PEP process and procedures. As well as updates on their attainment and progress this should include discussion of their attitude, emotional state, friendships etc. If a child has a statement or Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) then one of PEP meetings is run alongside the annual SEN review. This will ensure targets in the EHCP can be addressed through the PEP and that Social Workers and carers have the chance to review the impact of the SEN support for the child. In September 2018 an SEN lead within the Virtual School team has been identified, an SEN tracking document developed and meetings take place every two weeks with SEN team to review all Cared for Children who either have a current SEN status or are under assessment, this information can then be shared through all advisors and be included in all PEPs, this has improved the timeliness of actions and interventions for SEND children, the Virtual School Headteacher is also a core member of the SEND panel which is held every 2 weeks. The Virtual School Head has delivered training to all SEND workers to support sharing information of how all staff can improve the education of cared for children as a corporate parent.

There is a rigorous Quality Assurance (QA) process which has been developed jointly by the Virtual School and the Designated Teachers, this has ensured that the quality of PEPs have increased and

continues to support schools to develop their own practise, this is reviewed each year to ensure process is robust. All PEPs are quality assured by each advisor and each term there is a robust moderation process led by the Virtual School Headteacher to support further improving the quality of all PEPs and to share best practise. A total of 194 summer term PEPs were quality assured and RAG rated for individual children using the following criteria.

OUTCOMES AND EVENTS	PEP RATING	Virtual School Support ACTION
Attendance below 80%	RED	
Episode of FTE since last PEP		Attend next PEP
Planned or possible placement move		Consider calling emergency PEP
Progress below expected for all subjects		Contact Headteacher re concerns
School move planned		Raise concerns with Social Worker
School rated as inadequate/special measures		Offer observation and planning
Attainment below age expected	AMBER	
Attendance between 80% and 90%		
Attendance between 90% and 95%		
Attendance has fallen since last PEP		Call school to discuss case
Attends school outside Cheshire East		Request specific additional information
Attends Special School (maintained or independent)		Call school before next PEP to assess progress
DT is new to post		Contact DT to offer staff training
Episode of FTE in past		Arrange to visit school to meet DT
Has recently moved school		Set up monitoring plan for interventions
In Y11 or Y6		
Lives in residential provision		
Previous PEP targets not achieved		
Progress below expected rate for 1 subjects		
School rated as RI		
Attainment equal to age expected	GREEN	
Attainment above age expected		
Attendance above 95%		Aim to attend 1 PEP per year
Attends school inside Cheshire East		Do not attend next PEP
DT is experienced		Offer advice and support if needed
In year other than 6 or 11		
Placement secure		
Previous PEP targets have been met		

Development of an ePEP

The Virtual School has worked with the Cheshire East Project Development group to develop an ePEP on Liquid Logic. The initial trials started in September 2017 with a pilot group of 7 schools. Due to the sensitive nature of the information being transferred there is a need for several data sharing agreements to be in place before access to the ePEP is granted. Schools using the ePEP are now finding it easier, our aim is to have all primary and secondary schools on ePEP by June 2020, we have further improved the content of the ePEP following feedback and have developed a signs of safety approach and format and have put more emphasis on SMART targets ensuring pupil premium is reviewed in detail for impact. We are further developing during next year to introduce ePEPs for Early Years and Post 16 to align and ensure consistency across all years.

9. School Admissions

The Virtual School are responsible for ensuring that every child has access to suitable education. Where possible and appropriate school moves will be avoided as it has been recognised that school can be a consistent and stabilising feature of a child's life. If a move is essential then the following principles apply:

- Educational provision should mean a full-time place.
- Schools judged by Ofsted to be 'good' or 'outstanding' should be prioritised for Cared or Children in need of a new school.
- The choice of education setting should be based on what any good parent would want for their child. It should be based on evidence that the setting can meet the educational needs of the child and help them make the maximum progress.
- The child's wishes and feelings should be taken into account and the suitability of the education setting tested by arranging an informal visit with the child.

Children move schools for a number of reasons which include

- Change of foster placement which means that continuing at current school is unrealistic
- Carers move house which means that continuing at current school is unrealistic
- Change to live with adopters
- Change of school if proximity to social contacts/family are having a strong negative impact on the child's progress and learning
- Change when school can longer meet needs (SEN or non-SEN)

Cared for children are given the highest priority under school admission arrangements and the usual fair access protocols do not apply. The Virtual School works with Head teachers to make sure that any admission is made as swiftly as possible. Where schools are reluctant to offer places the Virtual School will consider making appeals or directing schools to admit. In 2018-19 there were no appeals made and no directions needed. All children for whom a place in primary and secondary schools were requested were allocated a place swiftly. The Virtual School works with all schools who are admitting a child to offer support, with funding if needed to ensure a smooth integration. Where children are placed in schools rated below 'Good' a clear risk assessment process is in place to review the provision, advisors attend all PEP meetings throughout the academic year to ensure progress, attainment and support is reviewed termly.

10. Attendance

The Virtual School monitors attendance of all cared for children by commissioning an independent company, Welfare Call, to contact schools to collect a record of attendance.

Attendance at both primary and secondary has decreased this year with the average primary attendance falling from 95% to 90% and the average secondary attendance falling from 93% to 90%.

Attendance in secondary school shows an inevitable decrease in May/June while Y11 pupils are taking exams and subsequently recorded as study leave, this occurs in all schools.

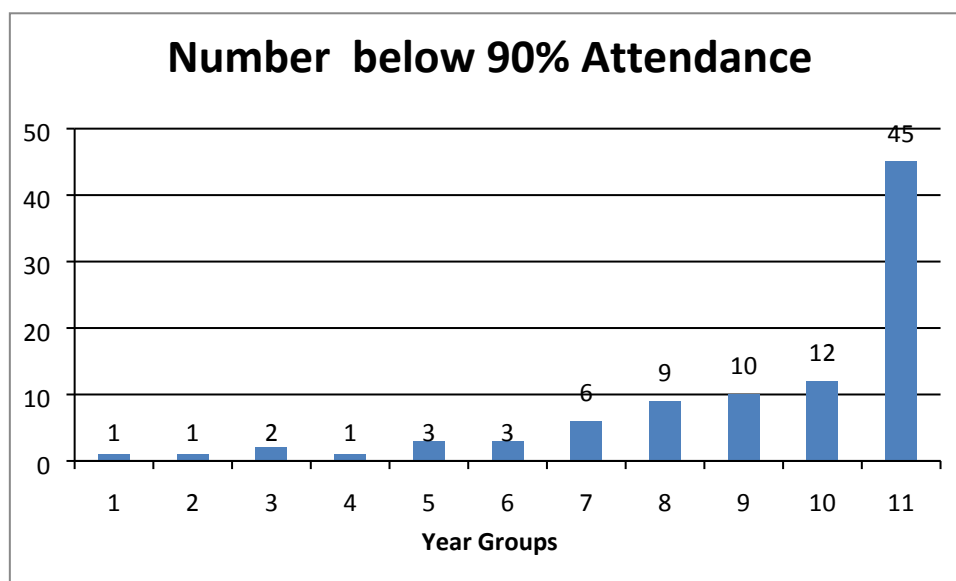
100% attendance	99% and above attendance	98% and above attendance	Below 90%
51 children	103	149	93
15%	30%	44%	27%

All Children with 100% attendance received a letter and certificate from the Virtual School in recognition of this achievement.

Below 90% Special	Below 90% Primary	Below 90% Secondary
20 Children	7 children	66 children

There were 93 children whose attendance fell below 90% and would be considered persistently absentees. This is 27% of the Reception- Year 11 cohort; this has increased from 19% in 2017/18 and 15% in 2016/17.

There were 143 children who experienced placement moves in 2018/19. Approximately 42% of the statutory school age cohort. 30 children moved 2 times, 3 children moved three times, 4 children moved 4 times and 1 child moved 5 times.



Actions taken to improve attendance

- Set up regular tracking meetings with SEN to monitor progress and avoid delays with EHCP and schools changes
- Clear tracking document has been created and fortnight meetings with advisors are in place to review attendance of all children
- Attendance data is shared at corporate parenting workstream groups to support sharing and communicating information

- Work closely with social care to avoid delay in starting school or applying for school places where placement changes occur
- Hold emergency PEPs in cases of repeat exclusions, involving Education Psychologist if appropriate
- Appointed a new specialist attendance officer for 2019/20 with a focus on improving attendance of cared for children. To track and monitor attendance daily and support children, schools, carers and family to improve attendance.
- Inform Supervising Social Workers so that carers can be encouraged and supported to help improve attendance

11. Exclusions

The Virtual School has a duty to work with Head teachers to try and avoid excluding a cared for child and to make sure that he have the support in place to thrive and make progress. During 2018/19 the Virtual School has been quick in its response to exclusion or threat of exclusions so that a joint plan for the child can be implemented which identifies any key triggers and also instances when the inappropriate behaviour does not occur and these strengths can be built on. If an exclusion was unavoidable then there were similar meeting held afterwards to try and avoid any further instances. Schools or carers are asked to inform the Virtual School whenever an exclusion takes place and usually the advisor will call the school to find out more. In the case of repeat exclusions, additional PEPs will be held to check that all necessary support is being given.

The Virtual School has commissioned places at the Fermain Alternative Provision in Macclesfield and this has contributed to the reduction in repeat exclusions and total number of sessions lost with identified KS4 children. The Fermain staff have been trained in how to support children with insecure attachment and Pupil premium funding has been used to help provide a mentor/key worker to support our children as a cared for champion. There have been no cases of permanent exclusion in academic year 2018/19 with only 2 fixed term exclusions recorded for primary age children. There still seems to be a higher number of fixed term exclusions at secondary school which is that of the national picture, the Virtual School Headteacher is working alongside the Northwest Virtual Head group to design a regional guide to support reducing exclusions and offer advice and guidance to schools.

	Proportion of pupils subject to fixed term exclusion	Average Number of days lost per pupil
2016/17	13%	4 days
2017/18	10%	4 days
2018/19	12%	5 days

12. Participation of young people

The Virtual School recognises that young people are at the heart of all its work and that to be effective in helping young people to succeed in education, their wishes and feelings must be listened to.

All young people are invited to contribute to their PEPs, either by attending the meeting or by sharing their thoughts on the 'My Voice' form which can be presented at the meeting on their behalf. Action plans are influenced by this input in a variety of ways such as:

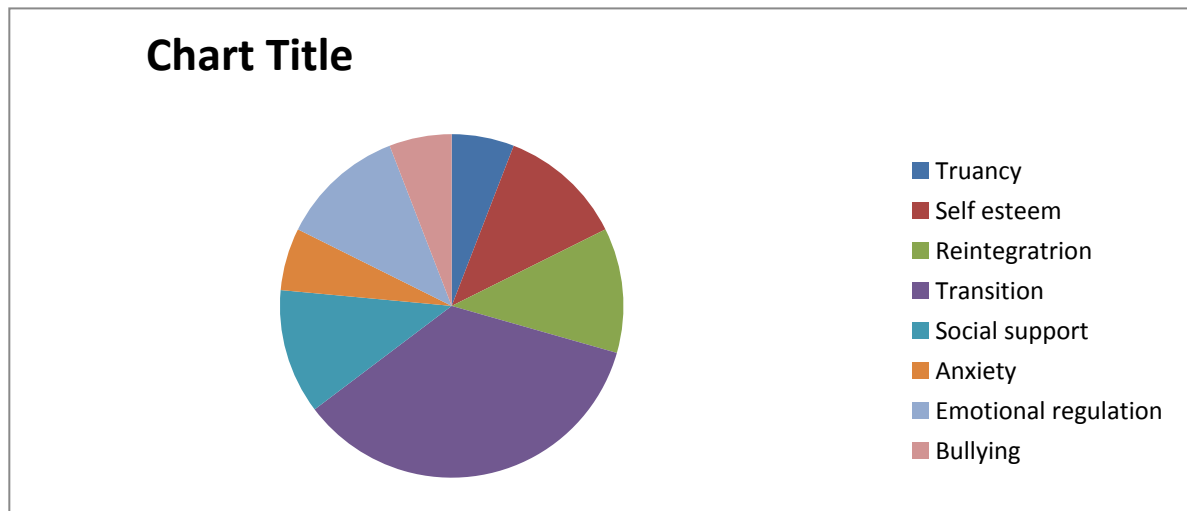
- Deciding what subjects to have tutoring in and when/where this takes place,
- Determining the order in which topics are addressed in revision,
- Agreeing targets for improvement in attendance or behaviour,
- Identifying any particular issues in school which show a staff training need
- Deciding whether additional adult support, eg mentor is required.

The voice of young people is included in staff appointments and children have participated on interview panels this year. They were involved in planning the questions and identifying the desirable qualities and had an equal say with other panel members when the decisions were made. The 'My voice' document has been developed this year following a working group session led by the Virtual School Head teacher with a number of Cared for Children and Careleavers who supported redesigning this document in line with Signs of Safety. The feedback from children and schools of the new format has been positive. The participation team attend all corporate parenting workstream meetings to ensure that information around education is shared and communicated effectively.

Where children are not attaining and are struggling in school the VS advisor works 1-1 to gain understanding from the child of what support can be put in place. The Virtual School has employed a learning mentor who is working 1-1 with children referred due to SEMH or high levels of anxiety who need extra support that schools are not able to offer, she works closely with schools to empower and train staff to continue support children. From May-July the learning mentor set up a transition group to work with children in Year 6 transitioning to high school, many sessions were focused on the needs identified by the children.

13. Learning Mentor

Virtual School has a full time learning mentor who was newly appointed March 2019, the main aim is to work with school aged children to support Social, Emotional mental health and transition, in particular when children have had a placement or school change or where children have high levels of anxiety. The learning mentor works alongside Designated Teachers and other agencies to support Cared for Children to overcome barriers to learning.



Our Learning mentor follows different programmes of study depending on the needs of the child and consults with professionals and carers prior to planning this. This multi-faceted approach aims to upskill the schools and carers enabling them to provide a consistent approach which can be maintained once the direct work with the Learning Mentor (LM) ceases. The focus of work with young people has included:

- Joined up work for Y6-Y7 transition
- Support in reintegrating back into mainstream provision
- 1:1 Anxiety CBT intervention
- How to manage challenging social interactions and friendships
- Support around emotional regulation and the exploration of feelings

Our LM draws from training from an Educational Psychologist (EP) in Emotional Literacy Support (ELSA), Mental Health First Aid and Emotion Coaching in order to support the young people she works with and carries out pre and post assessments to measure impact. The ELSA training in particular has enabled our LM to become skilled in how to deal with the following:

- Emotional literacy
- Building resilience and self-esteem
- Story work, bereavement and loss
- Puppet work, active listening and reflective conversations
- Understanding feelings, social and friendship skills

The Learning mentor has worked with 17 children since April. Throughout next year we will be developing the role of the learning mentor to work with schools to use a range of toolkits to allow for specific identification of needs.

Case study

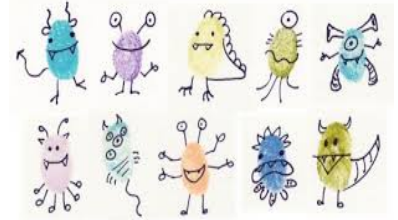
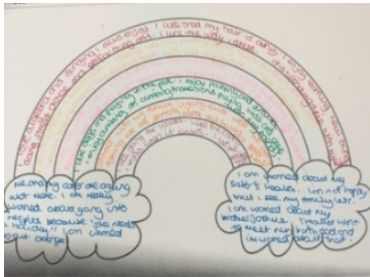
A was referred to the learning mentor to support her move to a new school following a lack of engagement and deterioration in behavior at her previous school , as well as a number of placement breakdowns.

A was very anxious and resistant to starting at her new school and initially completed online learning in the school library. To begin with the LM visited A 3 times a week at school to develop a strong relationship with her.

In summer term the LM supported A in 3 identified lessons a week and A began to complete her online learning in the SEND room with peers.

In September 2019 A was to attend lessons full time with support from the LM and an LSA funded by the VS. The LM did a 'meet and greet' with A for the first two weeks, went into form followed by first lesson. The LM is now gradually reducing the amount of time supporting A in school as she begins to develop relationships with school staff.

The aim is that, by November, A is attending lessons full time and the LM will complete sessions around anxiety and self esteem.



'Are you the VS? I like it when you come and help me with my feelings. Like when I'm angry' (YP)

I really appreciate everything the VS has done for A in finding him a new school. You have all been very supportive' (carer)

‘We have seen a vast improvement in H’s ability to regulate his emotions since he has been doing work with the VS. We really appreciate the support you have given to H’s teacher around supporting him positively”
(SENDCo)

A has a good relationship with both her VS LM and advisor and recently stated that she ‘wouldn’t have gone into lessons without you (LM) as I get too nervous and everybody stares. I want to be in lessons and make friends now.’ (YP)

14. Post 16 Tutor

1:1 tuitions are offered to 16-18 years old. Most of the young people taking part are currently NEET and/or have no formal qualifications. If there is a need and there is a capacity within the caseload, 1:1 tuition is also offered to under-16 and over-18 years old. The purpose of 1:1 tuition is to gain qualifications, improve confidence, to engage in other positive activities and progress to EET.

1:1 Tuition Offer:

Functional Skills Maths and English. Every student gets access to an online learning resource (bksb). Students take an Initial Assessment test to determine current level. Then Individual Learning Plan is created and the student follows that plan, using learning resources provided.

During the last academic year, 100% of the students who attempted, have passed their Functional Skills Exams and gained qualifications.

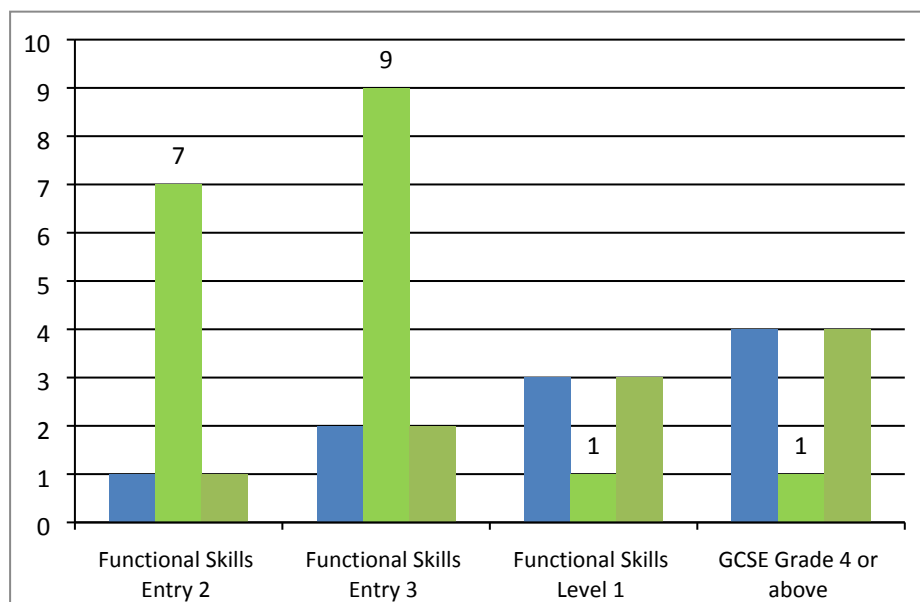


Fig. 1 Qualifications achieved in 2019, from January to September

GCSE Maths and English

Students must be enrolled on a GCSE course with college/other provider VS will support with process.

Additional support is offered to UASC young people who are currently on ESOL courses

ESOL - Teaching ESOL to UASC Young People, who are currently awaiting to enrol to an ESOL course. Students are working at their individual pace and create a portfolio of activities covered in 16 topics of ESOL Activities. Main aim is to introduce English to non-speakers (Pre-Entry Level) and to boost their language skills at Levels Entry 1 and Entry 2.

Student 1	Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life (Speaking and Listening, Writing, Reading) (Entry 2) (QCF)
Student 2	Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life (Speaking and Listening, Writing, Reading) (Entry 2) (QCF)
Student 3	Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life (Speaking and Listening) (Entry 3) (QCF) Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life (Writing) (Entry 2) (QCF) Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life (Reading) (Entry 2) (QCF)
Student 4	Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life (Speaking and Listening) (Entry 2) (QCF) Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life (Writing) (Entry 1) (QCF) Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life (Reading) (Entry 1) (QCF)
Student 5	Pre-Entry (not regulated provision)
Student 6	Pre-Entry (not regulated provision)
Student 7	Currently studying ESOL at Entry 1
Student 8	Currently studying ESOL at Entry 1
Student 9	Currently studying ESOL at Entry 1

Fig. 2 ESOL Qualifications achieved in Academic Year 2018/2019

- Support to catch up with outstanding work for college/other provider's courses e.g. Health and Social Care, Painting and Decorating, Hair and Beauty, Employability, etc.
- Support of the Cygnet Programme (12 weeks work experience with 1:1 tuition of Functional Skills Maths and English)
- Short courses offered by Cheshire East Council Learning Lounge (e.g. Food Safety level 1)

Case Study

Background:

18 years old, NEET, anxiety (don't leave home without presence of the parent or professional)

Reason for referral:

To achieve Maths qualifications, to engage in positive activities

Intervention:

YP initially agreed to 1:1 tuition. Tutor was introduced by PA and YP agreed to meet tutor at the library for Initial Assessment. After several unsuccessful attempts to engage the student, it was decided that PA will attend tuition sessions until YP feels confident to attend unsupported.

YP completed Initial Assessment test. The outcome of the test, clear ILP and Solution-Focused approach, encouraged YP to continue with tuition. After the first session with PA, YP has decided to attend sessions without presence of PA.

Outcomes:

YP started to attend sessions regularly and has passed Functional Skills Maths Entry 2 and Entry 3 exams.

YP continues 1:1 tuition; working towards Maths Level 1

YP has engaged in 1:1 sessions with volunteer, learning crocheting (this was set up by VS as YP expressed an interest in wanting to learn).

15. Partnership working

Partnership working is crucial to the effectiveness of the Virtual School and we recognise our role in part of a team with a child at the heart. The Virtual School is one part of the corporate parent body that works to look after children in care and we recognise that in order to be effective we need to have close working relationships with our partners. Teams with the council with whom the Virtual School works are:

- Social Care – social workers, care leavers, fostering and cared for support therapeutic teams attending all resource and accommodation panel meetings weekly to support sharing information on education when placements moves are being considered/sourced. Attending stability meetings with social workers and carers. Supporting the organisation of annual STAR awards to celebrate the successes of our children.
- Special Education Needs and Disabilities Team, Virtual School Headteacher is a core member of SEND panel which takes place every 2 weeks.
- Youth Justice Service, with an YJS advisor who works part-time within the virtual school team
- Youth Support Service – monthly meetings to support interventions to reduce NEET
- Early Years Team, with an advisor who works part-time within the virtual school team
- Educational Psychology Service, with a senior EP who works part-time within the virtual school team
- Corporate parenting, with the Virtual School Headteacher attending all Corporate Parenting Committee meetings

A SPEED (Sixteen plus education and employment destinations) cross service 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. Through good collaboration of managerial and operational staff much work has been done to continue to support reducing NEET and to ensure all young people have timely and effective actions and interventions in place to re-engage back into education.

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. Areas to be addressed by this group have been identified as; improving attendance in persistent absentees or school refusers, minimising the time between school moves, particularly for children with SEN and ensuring that foster carers and residential home staff are involved with exam preparation.

Both are workstreams that feed into the corporate parenting group and committee and have a clear action plan developed as part of the corporate parenting strategy.

The Virtual School also attends or arranges other regular meetings which result in improved support for children. These include

- SEN tracking meetings to maintain momentum on cases with a VS SEN lead now in place within the team
- Children missing out on education to plan with joint services and ensure timely interventions and support is in place for any children not accessing full-time education
- Preparing for adulthood to ensure smooth transition to adult care

The Virtual School also works with the Independent Reviewing Officers and foster carers, providing training and support as needed. Through membership of Education, Headteacher and Virtual School Head groups the Virtual School is able to remain in touch with all current events relating to cared for children and also to make sure that other teams are aware of matters which influence their area.

The other team who are closely linked to Virtual School are Special Education and Disabilities Team (SEND). The VSH is a member of the SEN Assessment and Moderation Panel and the Head of Service/Service Manager have agreements in place which ensure that the Virtual School is involved in any cared for children cases who also have special educational needs and also offer advice for any SEN issues which arise for children placed outside of Cheshire East. The Virtual School Headteacher has led training sessions for all social workers and SEND workers. The Virtual School Headteacher is also part of the induction process for new social workers and IRO's.

Both social care and SEND supported during this years designated lead training network days to deliver workshops to over 90 school representatives as cross-service training, feedback was extremely positive from all attendees.

"Some of the best local authority training i have attended"

"Other services should adopt the cross-service training style"

The Virtual School also works with the Independent Reviewing Officers, foster carers and governors providing training and support as needed. Through membership of Education, Headteacher and Virtual School Head groups both regional and national the Virtual School is able to remain in touch with all current events relating to cared for children and also to make sure that other teams are aware of matters which influence their area.



16. Training Provision

The statutory duties of the Virtual School include providing training on education issues relating to children in care and Head teachers and Governing Bodies are required to appoint a Designated Teacher to champion the cause of cared for children and also to ensure that this teacher has access to training. In CE this is provided in a variety of ways

- a) Update/network meetings open to all schools and led by the Virtual school
- b) Bespoke training in individual schools which can be around a particular child or for all staff including attachment and trauma whole staff training
- c) Arranging outside speakers to provide 'expert' input.

The universal training programme offered by the Virtual School for Designated Leads in Schools

Date	Title	Objectives
Oct 2018	New designated lead training	Understand role as a new designated lead teacher
Nov 2018	Designated teacher network	Social care workshop SEND workshop Adoption counts workshop Attachment and trauma workshop PEPS – what makes an outstanding PEP
May 2019	Regional conference	Ofsted National updates
June 2019	Designated teacher network	SDQ workshop Market place – support and advice on using PP+ effectively Careers and post 16 PEPs – what makes an outstanding PEP

The network events was held in Nov and June were attended by over 90 school representatives. This provided information amnd workshop sessions from a range of services. Feedback was positive with delegates stating that the sessions were useful and would help them to better support children in school.

Bespoke training has been arranged for more than fifteen schools, 1 local college and 1 local training provider where requested, these were all whole staff CPD training to focus on Attachment and Trauma to support schools becoming more trauma informed within their daily practise. All Virtual School staff are able to lead this training (we also work in conjunction with adoption counts) which also includes working with colleges and training providers. The Virtual School Headteacher has also supported to offer extra support in schools to conduct observations and offer feedback as a critical friend to help further support the needs of Cared for Children.

The Virtual School contributes to the Foster Carer training programme. Sessions have been planned on curriculum changes and attainment, preparing for tests/supporting learning at home, SEN and post-16 progression but uptake, like many foster carer training sessions attendance has been poor. This includes an event which was planned for carers and children to attend as an activity/coffee afternoon. Training is not mandatory for carers and there is a concern that the lack of engagement could indicate that carers do not demonstrate high educational aspirations and commitment for their children.

The Virtual School Headteacher has led a series of training sessions to other Virtual School teams within other local authorities.

We have used funding to continue to employ a retired member of the Virtual School team who has been delivering training across all Cheshire East schools - an outline of sessions offered:

In the period March to October we have delivered 20 sessions including Primary schools (10), Secondary Schools (4) and other providers including Reaseheath College, Total People and RSPCA. I have also led Foster Carer training. Some schools have had 2 sessions in the form of a whole school CPD presenting an overview of Attachment, trauma and brain development and then a follow up session looking at practical strategies to support behaviour and learning. As I worked with Cared for Children at Cheshire East for over 20 years this ensures that the training and support is targeted for schools and individual children.

Others have opted for 2 meetings one for teaching staff and then another more practical in nature for pastoral and support staff working directly with these children.

In all cases the training has been very well received:

'Informative and entertaining'

'A very enjoyable training session which has provided me with a deeper understanding of attachment'

'A great insight'.

'Powerful'.

'A very interesting session delivered by a knowledgeable and passionate trainer'.

'Superb, valuable and informative'.

'Very informative and thought provoking - it will help me in my teaching'.

Other sessions offered involved working alongside the Virtual School Educational Psychologist using The Circle of Adults model to help the school recognise exactly how they could best support a very complex child on their roll.

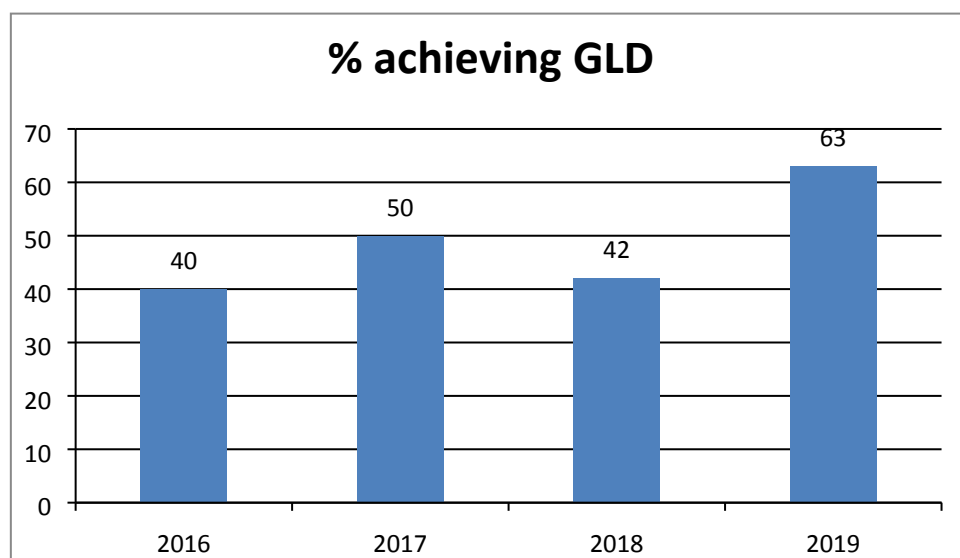
All sessions offered have been tailored to meet the specifications of the individual schools

17. Early Years Foundation Stage

There has been an increase in the number of reception children achieving a Good Level of Development. The number in this group has risen from 5 five in 2016 to 8 in 2017 to 14 in 2019.

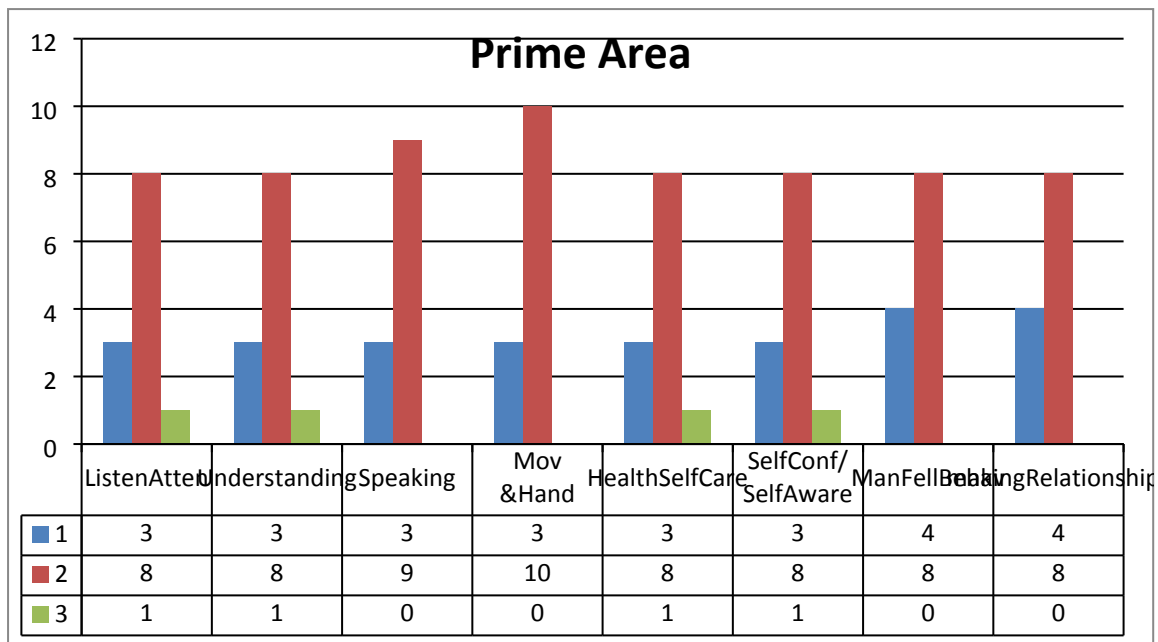
12 children are eligible as they have been in care for at least 12 months or more as of 31st March 2019 (*1 child left care before the end of the academic year). 1 child is exempt as the child is continuing in EYFS provision beyond the year in which they turn 5. Of these 7 children achieved GLD this equates to 63%

Percentage of pupils achieving GLD



For those children who did not achieve GLD 1 child has an EHCP and attends a specialist school that supports children with high level complex needs. Of the children who did not achieve GLD 3 became Cared for during academic year 2018.

Graph below shows the areas prime areas achieved (1 being low and 3 high), this shows that the main areas that our children struggle is with managing feelings and making relationships.



Nadhim Zahawi the former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families at the end of last academic year outlined his targets for all local authorities. Within his letter he set out his ambitious goal to halve by 2028, the percentage of children leaving reception year without the communication, language and literacy skills they need to thrive. To achieve this ambition 86% of children nationally would need to achieve the expected level in both communication and language and literacy. No local authority is currently is achieving this.

In order to support the Local Authority target the Virtual School Head teacher is working in close partnership with the Early Start Manager to support settings and Reception classes to access the speech and Language training via use of the Virtual Schools Pupil Premium.

18. Phonics Screening Test

The Phonics Screening Check shows how well children can use the phonics skills they've learned up to the end of Year 1, and identifies students who need extra phonics help. The checks consist of 40 words and non-words that a child will be asked to read one-on-one with a teacher. Non-words (or nonsense words, or pseudo words) are a collection of letters that will follow phonics rules children have been taught, but don't mean anything – children will need to read these with the correct sounds to show that they understand the phonics rules behind them. If children's score falls below the standard (32 marks), they will be given extra phonics help and can re-take the Phonics screening check in Year 2.

Year 1 2018/19

There were 10 Cared for Children who ended Year 1 in total, 6 eligible after being in care for at least 12 months. 4/6 were graded as Working At expected this equates to 67%. Early indicators show that we are just above the national average for 2019.

2018 NCER national CLA figure 63%

2018 NCER North West 63%

Of all 10 children in the cohort 7 were Working At standard and passed the phonics screening.

Those who did not pass will be supported during this academic year and will retake in year 2.

Year 2

Data below shows results of eligible children in Year 2 and shows that a further 2 who did not pass in Year 1 met the expected standard in Year 2. Although 3 other children did not pass, 2 of them made significant progress. **1 child shows on KEYPAS eligible data but is no longer Cared for.*

Phonics Year 1		Phonics Year 2	
Mark	Outcome	Mark	Outcome
34	Met standard		
30	Not met standard	33	Met standard
35	Met Standard		
37	Met Standard		
26	Not met Standard	36	Met standard
35	Met Standard		
33	Met Standard		
40	Met Standard		
39	Met Standard		
37	Met Standard		
9	Not met standard	22	Not met standard
12	Not met standard	15	Not met standard
19	Not met standard	28	Not met standard

19. Attainment at Key Stage 1

Children in Year 2 are assessed by teachers in Reading, Writing, Maths and Science. Children were assessed as:

- P Scales
- Pre Key Stage standards
- Working Towards the expected standard
- Working At the expected standard
- Working at Greater Depth of the expected standard

There were 22 Cared for Children who ended KS1 in total, 13 eligible ended KS1 after being in care for at least 12 months or more (**1 child is being taught 1 year below chronological age and 1 child is included on data but left care before taking SATs*). This was a decrease from 14 last year. Of these 13 children 9 were placed Out of Borough. 4 achieved R/W/M combined which equates to 31% which is slightly below last year's figure of 36%.**

Of the 13 eligible 8 have SEN needs with 4 having an EHCP.

Full Cohort (22 children)

	Cohort (20)	Working Towards	Working At expected	Greater Depth	Total % achieved
Reading/Writing/Maths			7	1	46%
Reading		6	9	3	55%
Writing (TA)		8	8	2	45%
Maths		8	10	1	50%
Science (TA)		5	15		68%

*4 children were working at Pre Key stage standards level*1 is age retained *1 left care before SATs

Eligible Cohort (13 Children)

	Cohort	Working Towards	Working At expected	Greater Depth	Total % achieved	National 2018
Reading/Writing/Maths			3	1	31%	35%
Reading		3	5	2	54%	51%
Writing (TA)		5	4	1	38%	42%
Maths		6	4	1	38%	49%
Science (TA)		3	8		62%	58%

*3 children were working at Pre key stage standards

**The changes that have taken place with KS1 and KS2 assessment frameworks over the last few years mean that some comparisons are not valid as the frameworks for some subjects changed.

Writing - "changes were made within the 2017/18 writing TA frameworks mean that judgements in 2018 are not directly comparable to those made using the previous interim frameworks in 2016 and 2017".

Reading, Maths, Science "The 2018/19 reading, maths and science TA frameworks mean judgements made in these subjects are not directly comparable to previous years."

20. Attainment at Key Stage 2

Children in Year 6 were assessed in Reading, Writing SPAG (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar), Maths and Science.

1 child is exempt as he was age retained into year 5 so will be starting Year 6 September 2019

This year group was more complex than last year with some outliers and small numbers of children significantly impacts the percentage data. Therefore I have shown all comparison data in the table below: At Key Stage 2 there were 20 Cared for Children in total with 18 eligible ending KS2 after being in care for at least 12 months or more. (*1 child is showing as CLA as was in care on 31st March but left before SATs and was not entered as working below)

- 5 children did not sit SATS as they were in Special Schools and working below; all of these children have an EHCP
- 4 children currently have school support plans in place
- 1 child is currently residing in Wales where they have a different education system and do not sit SATs
- 6 children in total did not sit exams; this equates to 33% (of the 18 children)

Eligible cohort:

Number of children	Reading	Writing	Maths	Science	R/W/M combined	SPAG
18 (all eligible)	6 Achieved Standard 33% (44%)	6 AS 33%	6 AS 33%	7 AS 39%	3 = 17% (28%)	7 AS 39%
17 (- 1 child from wales)	35% (47%)	35%	35%	41%	18% (29%)	41%
12 (number of children who actually sat exams)	50% (66.6)	50%	50%	58%	25% (41.6%)	58%

- 1 child achieved high results in all four subjects, he achieved full marks in SPAG and reading and his GDS in writing is exceptional as nationally only 20% of all children achieved this.
- 1 child achieved high results in reading and SPAG.

There are 2 children who had a scaled scored of 99 in the reading test, where 100 is the required standard. They are awaiting remarks. Both children achieved the standard in all other subjects. (see above in red if remarks change reading to 100)

Time period	Level	CLA KS2 Reading %	CLA KS2 Writing %	CLA KS2 Mathematics %	CLA KS2 RWM %
2017/18	National	51	49	47	35
2017/18	Regional	54	52	51	38
2017/18	Local authority	45	45	40	24
2018/19	Local authority (12 who sat)	50	50	50	25

21. Attainment at Key Stage 4

At Key Stage 4 there were 50 children overall with 39 eligible who had been in care for 12 months.

Cohort Characteristics (of all 50 children):

- 48% of the cohort have SEND needs
- 28% of the cohort have an EHCP
- 54% of the cohort were educated outside of Cheshire East
- 2 children were detained in Young Offenders
- 3 children achieved a number of grade 6 -8 in either English Literature, Language or Maths

A joint policy paper published by ADCS, NCER and NAVSH in 2015 made the following recommendation in terms of cohort analysis:

“The DfE methodology for assessing local authority performance on ‘closing the attainment gap’ at each key stage is based on the performance of the whole cohort of children where they have been in care longer than 12 months, excluding certain groups of pupils from the measure, such as pupils who attend special schools. Pupils with an EHC plan attending a special school, or an enhanced resource centre attached to a mainstream school, whose additional needs exclude them from access to the national curriculum should therefore be excluded from this indicator. Any analysis should be considered in the light of the cohort size”

If we consider the data for this group: Of the 39 eligible only 29 were entered for GCSEs (inc english and Maths) with a further 3 children at specialist schools/provision with an EHCP who were not entered for a full suite of GCSEs (figures shown in red)

*(Eligible cohort – each child out of 26 is worth approx. 4% points)

Eligible Cohort

	English Language (only)	English Literature(only)	English (achieved in either)	Maths	Eng and Maths	2018 National Eng & Maths CLA
9-5	4 (15%)	4 (15%)	5 (19%)	3 (12%)	3 (7.6% of 39 eligible) (12% out of 26 who sat)	8%
9-4	9 (35%)	7 (27%)	9 (35%)	7 (27%)	6 (15.3% of 39 eligible) (23% of 26 who sat)	17%
3	3 (12%)	4 (15%)		5 (19%)		

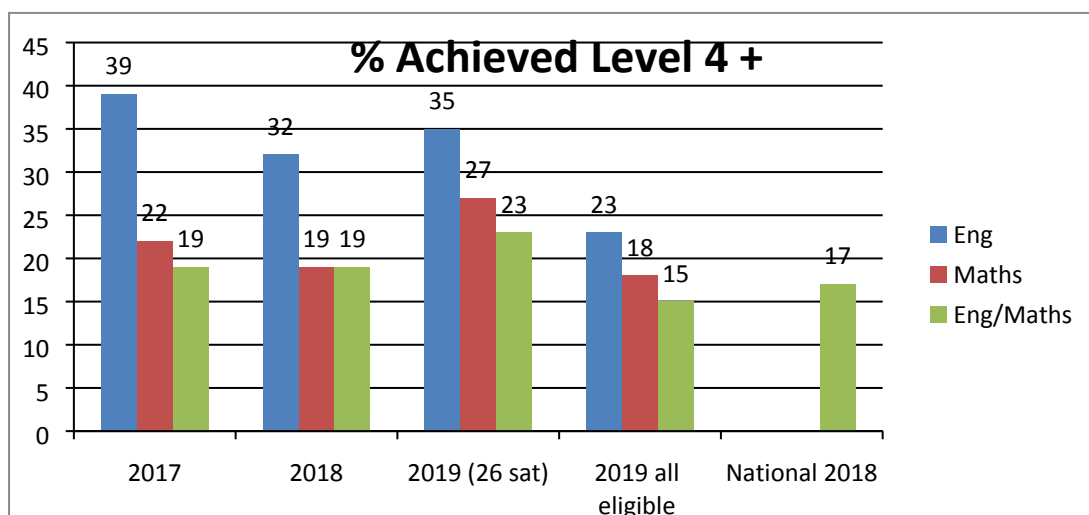
**we will be contacting schools regarding remarks for those children with 3 were appropriate (awaiting a number of remarks)*

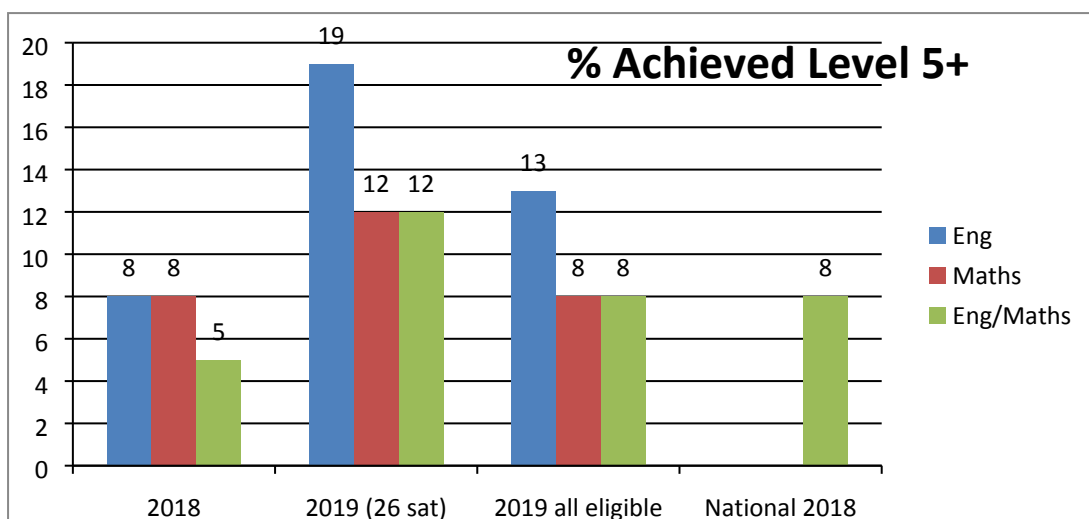
The overall level of SEN within the cohort increased from 48.6% last year to 56.4% this year, 12 children had an EHCP and 10 with School Support. A significant number of students within this group had more than 1 school (56%) and or home placement during secondary school, which increases the vulnerability and would therefore make it harder for students to achieve their potential and target grades.

22 children of those 39 eligible were placed in out of borough schools. All pupils have been supported to find positive destinations for post 16 and almost all started these programmes in Sept 2019.

Progress and outcomes was greatest in pupils with only 1 school/placement with good levels of attendance and so this will be continually monitored and challenged. All children not entered for GCSEs were either working towards functional skills or Btec qualifications to support progression for Post 16 options.

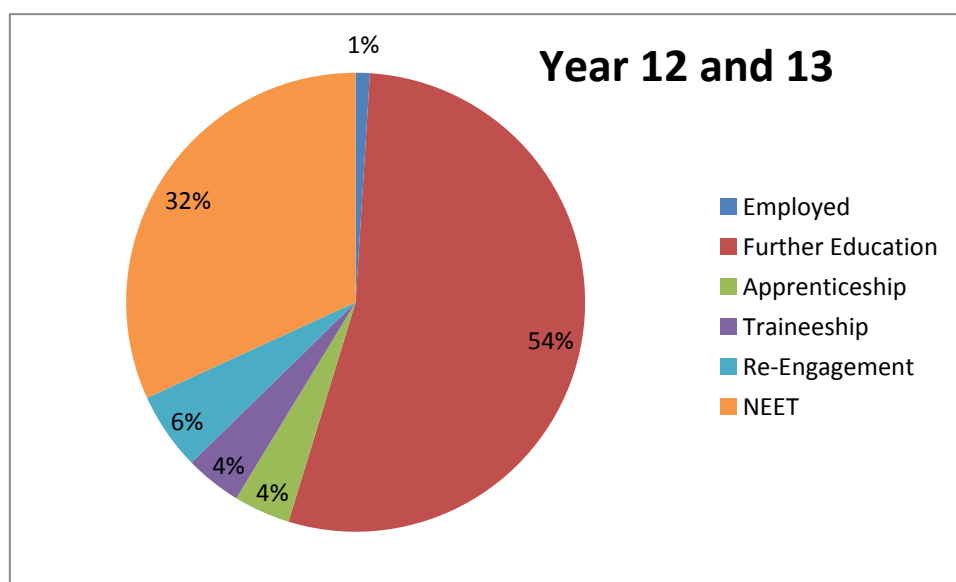
- Progress 8 -1.48 pts 2018 (CLA 12 months -1.24) * awaiting national data for 2019 to allow for calculation of CE data
- Attainment 8 17.5 2018 (CLA 12 months 18.8) * awaiting national data for 2019 to allow for calculation of CE data





22. Post-16 ETE Outcomes

Post-16 engagement is supported by a dedicated post 16 advisor and is monitored in monthly cross service meetings to support timely interventions for identified NEET young people. 8 young people have achieved Level 3/A levels and 5 have secured a place at university from September 2019, the other 3 young people have decided to move onto work/apprenticeships. We have a post 16 tutor who's focus is to work with NEET young people on a range of functional skills to support re-engagement back into education, who works closely with the lifelong learning team to access a range of courses and qualifications.



Year 12:

47 students in total of this 10 were NEET (21%), 5 are ESOL who are all engaging in support. Students are engaging in a range of post 16 pathways including College courses ranging from entry level to level 3, apprenticeships and re-engagement programmes.

3 students are on level 3 courses and are progressing to the next level and 4 are accessing apprenticeships.

Year 13:

40 students in total of this 12 were NEET (30%), 9 are ESOL who are engaging in support to access entry level qualifications. Students are engaging in a range of post 16 pathways.

4 students completed and passed level 3 qualifications, 2 have secured places at university, 1 has secured a higher level apprenticeship and 1 is working.

Year 14:

18 students in total, 5 have completed and passed level 3 qualifications of these 3 have secured places at university, 1 is continuing with education and 1 is working.

Overall this is the highest number of cared for young people we have had moving onto university

23. Service objectives 2018/19

Strategic priority	Summary	Lead	Achieved/Some Progress/ Not achieved
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 and to promote mental health and attachment awareness in schools	<p>Joint training and workshop session (December 2018) for designated lead teachers</p> <p>Guidance booklet for Previously Cared for, Adopted and SGO children working alongside adoption counts regional group – May 2019</p> <p>Attachment and trauma training in over 20 schools, colleges and training providers to support all staff becoming attachment aware following DLT training in Dec 2018</p> <p>Dedicated member of staff to offer support, advice and guidance for previously cared for children and families(Feb 2019)</p>	LR	Achieved
Implement a self-assessment tool for use with and by schools to improve their practice and support for cared for children	<p>Adapted a self assessment tool for schools following DLT to support audit of current protocols and practise</p> <p>Checklist created to support new DLT with roles and responsibilities in line with DFE guidance</p> <p>Created a cared for children profile for use in schools</p>	LR	Some progress
Virtual head teacher to review impact and effectiveness of current arrangements	<p>Clear and robust tracking documents to review attendance of all children.</p> <p>Clear and robust tracking documents to</p>	LR	Achieved

<p>to ensure support and interventions are targeted and lead to improved outcomes.</p> <p>Introduce a SEN lead within the Virtual School team who will track and monitor the progress of assessments and sit on SEN panel to ensure swift communication of information between teams</p>	<p>review attainment of all children.</p> <p>Clear procedures to support improving SEN and aligning EHCP reviews and PEPs with an SEN lead within the VS team in place.</p> <p>Clear procedures to support building Signs of Safety into practise and procedures.</p> <p>Virtual School are working closely across service areas to support clear impact for children.</p>		
<p>Roll out the ePEP(Electronic Personal Education Plan) to all secondary schools by August 2019 to improve the ease of completion, efficiency and allow for measuring impact of Pupil Premium funding.</p>	<p>ePEP and PEP documents have been redesigned to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Signs of Safety format -Review of PP funding to ensure schools are measuring impact each term - My voice was adapted with working group of cared for children and care leavers to change format for scaling system -Training has taken place for schools in Dec 2018 and within identified schools as needed and requested - Over 60% of secondary schools are now accessing ePEP system through Liquid Logic - VSH led training session for other local authority Virtual Schools -VSH has introduced a new Cared for child profile for schools to use for all children to support sharing information across teaching staff and to enable full review of targets and actions prior to each PEP to ensure there is a whole school approach. <p>We have further developed ePEP format following feedback from schools in December 2018 to ensure the system is fit for purpose and meets the needs of all users for ease of use, this includes information being populated and allowing for users to attach documents and evidence to further support information and evidence sent from schools.</p>	LR	Achieved

Implement a revised quality assurance process for PEP arrangement to increase the number of good/outstanding	Clear and robust QA process for advisors is in place. Clear and robust moderation process is in place. Training delivered to Designated lead teachers to support 'what makes an outstanding PEP'	LR/CL	Achieved
Improve attendance to ensure reduction in Persistent Absence figures in particular within Special Schools	Clear and robust tracking documents in place to allow for regular monitoring and reviewing of individual Childrens attendance. To improve overall attendance and reduce PA figures. To appoint a dedicated specialist attendance officer for Cared for Children	LR	Some progress
Reduce exclusions within primary settings	This has continued to improve throughout last and this academic year, there have been no exclusions over 5 days and no Permanent exclusions. The number of Fixed term exclusions has continued to reduce within primary settings and where these have occurred Virtual School advisors and head teacher have been informed immediately to support actions and interventions for support for identified children.	LR	Achieved
Develop careers events across Cheshire East to enable young people to access support and information	Developed links with skills growth company, we are up to date with local careers events Ensure all cared for children have access to a careers advisor Clear transition systems in place for Year 11 Increase number of young people achieving level 3 and accessing university	LR/KF	Some progress

24. Development Priorities for 2019-20

In addition to the specific actions included in the various sections of the report the Virtual School has identified the following priority areas and key actions to be addressed this year.

1. Continue to provide support and interventions for schools and children to improve outcomes and attendance, evaluating the impact of the intervention and use of Pupil Premium.

- Monitor requests and impact of Pupil Premium and develop a system to ensure schools are made accountable for impact.
- Introduce a governing body within the virtual school to scrutinise all areas of the service.
- Increase targeted support and interventions for pupils in Y6, 11 and Post-16.
- Develop locality model working to support children and schools.

- Introduce a specialist attendance officer for cared for children to increase attendance and reduce persistent absence.
 - Improve outcomes of KS2 and KS4.
 - Improve Literacy and Communication of Early Years and Primary aged children.
- 2. Identify and implement changes resulting from the Social Care Act 2017 which includes Virtual School Head teacher to have responsibilities for previously looked after children as well as looked after and to promote mental health and attachment awareness in schools**
- Evaluate models and make changes to staffing structure and use of funding to support improving outcomes of children.
 - Continue to increase support to schools to offer full staff CPD to increase Attachment and Trauma awareness.
 - Continue to work alongside adoption counts to develop information and guidance for Previously Cared for and adopted children.
- 3. Monitor the impact of commissioned and front line services through engagement, progress and outcomes**
- Work with procurement and commissioning to develop monitoring process for commissioned services.
 - Increase direct supervision of commissioned service and clarify expectations to be achieved.
 - Review and monitor the impact if commissioned service to ensure quality and value for money.
 - Improve outcomes of children accessing alternative provision.
 - Work alongside social care to ensure education involvement with Bespoke project.
- 4. Implement the self- assessment tool for use with and by schools to improve their practice and support for cared for children**
- Identify schools where progress is below expected and use self-evaluation to plan for improvement.
 - Share best practice where pupils achieve above expectations.
- 5. Improve completion rate and quality of PEPS and continue to develop the design of the ePEP and be in place in all primary and secondary schools**
- Develop and introduce ePEP for early years and post 16 providers.
 - Improve completion rate of PEPs (termly).
 - Improve number of PEPs graded as 'Good'/'Outstanding'.
- 6. Develop careers events across Cheshire East to enable young people to access support and information**
- Improve the quality of careers and advice for all Cared for Children.
 - Introduce specific enterprise and careers events for Cared for Children.

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Working for a brighter future together

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 12 November 2019

Report Title: Annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report 2018-19

Senior Officer: Mark Palethorpe, Acting Executive Director of People

1 Report Summary

- 1.1 The Annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report is a statutory requirement and provides a reflective overview of activity and performance of the team of Independent Reviewing Officers in Cheshire East for 2018-2019.
- 1.2 The Local Authority is required to ensure it has an effective IRO service in respect of our cared for children and young people, their role being to monitor and review the care plans of all children in our care as well as to fulfill a quality assurance function.
- 1.3 The report also outlines the challenge this service provides through the Dispute Resolution Process to ensure the care plans of our cared for children meet their needs and there is not drift or delay in achieving the best possible outcomes fulfilling the Local Authority's role of Corporate Parent.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is recommended to endorse the report.

3 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The report sets out the performance and challenges in providing a good service for our cared for children. This is a statutory report.

4 Other Options Considered

4.1 Not applicable, this is a statutory report.

5 Background

5.1 The IRO annual report is a statutory requirement. The role of the Corporate Parenting Board is to scrutinise the contents, consider the findings, to inform future activity. Please refer to report attached.

6 Implications of the Recommendations

6.1 Legal Implications

6.1.1. The report itself is a statutory requirement however; there are no legal implications within the recommendations.

6.2 Finance Implications

6.1.2. There are no direct financial implications contained within the recommendations it is essential however that services for our cared for children are appropriately resourced.

6.3 Policy Implications

6.1.3. There are no policy implications within the recommendations. The activity for cared for children is shaped by national legislation.

6.4 Equality Implications

6.1.4. The IRO Annual Report reflects the needs of all children in our care.

6.5 Human Resources Implications

6.1.5. There are not direct Human Resource Implications within the recommendations

6.6 Risk Management Implications

6.1.6. If the IRO Annual Report was not produced or did not reflect the statutory requirements there would be a risk to the reputation of the Local Authority. Within this years report the recommendations would not affect risk to the Local Authority.

6.7 Rural Communities Implications

6.1.7. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

6.8 Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

6.1.8. There are no direct implications for children and young people.

6.9 Public Health Implications

6.1.9. There are no direct implications for public health.

6.10 Climate Change Implications

6.1.10. No direct implications with the recommendation of the report.

7 Ward Members Affected

7.1 Cared for children live in all areas of Cheshire East therefore all wards are affected however, the recommendations do not profile any ward in particular.

8 Consultation & Engagement

8.1 In the production of this report, there has been consultation with multi-agency colleagues and cared for children and young people. A separate (see attached) has been produced specifically for our cared for population reflecting the areas of performance they are most interested in.

9 Access to Information

9.1 The Annual Report is attached at Appendix 1.

9.2 The Young People's Version is attached at Appendix 2.

9.3 The case examples used are anonymised and permission has been sought from the individuals. The formal report is a public document and will be placed on the Cheshire East website once its content is agreed.

10 Contact Information

10.1 Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

Name: Kate Rose

Job Title: Head of Children's Safeguarding

Email: Kate.rose@cheshireeast.gov.uk

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INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS (CARED FOR CHILDREN)

**ANNUAL REPORT
2018-2019**

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1. Introduction

This report is a reflective overview of activity and performance in Cheshire East in respect of our Cared for Children and Young People. It covers the period of April 2018 to March 2019 and provides information about the performance and practice of the Independent Reviewing Officer Team in relation to the monitoring and review of care planning in Cheshire East. Additionally it reports on the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) in relation to Quality Assurance through the Practice Alert and Dispute Resolution Policy.

2. Statutory role and legal context

The appointment by local authorities of an Independent Reviewing Officer is a statutory requirement. Their purpose is to ensure that the care plan for a looked after child fully reflects the child's needs and that each child's wishes and feelings are given full and due consideration and that the actions set out in the plan are consistent with the local authority's statutory responsibilities towards the child.

The Children and Young Person's Act 2008, followed by revised care planning regulations and guidance which came into force in April 2011, strengthened the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer. The statutory duties of the IRO are to [section 25B (1) -1989 Act]:

- monitor the performance by the local authority of their functions in relation to
- the child's case;
- participate in any review of the child's case
- ensure that any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case
- are given due consideration by the appropriate authority; and
- perform any other function which is prescribed in regulations.

As corporate parents each local authority should act for the children they care for as a responsible and conscientious parent would act. There are two clear and separate aspects to the function of an Independent Reviewing Officer:

- Chairing the child's review; and
- Monitoring the child's case on an ongoing basis.

The Independent Reviewing Officer service in Cheshire East sits within the Children's Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit. The service is managed independently of children's operational social work and is therefore offering a level of independence that enables the service to effectively challenge plans, arrangements and the practice of the local authority. The strategic lead for the service reports directly to the Director of Children's Social Care. Independent Reviewing Officers and their managers have no involvement in preparing a child's care plan, management of the case, operational decision making and/or allocation of resources to Cared for Children.

The Independent Reviewing Officer Handbook sets out the statutory roles and duties as well as the strategic and managerial responsibilities of Local Authorities in establishing an *effective* Independent Reviewing Officer service.

The legislative framework regulating services of Independent Reviewing Officers (Children and Adoption Act 2002, Children and Young People Act 2008, IRO Handbook 2010 and Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010) imposes a specific set of statutory duties which all

IROs are expected to execute in order to improve outcomes for the children in public care, in particular it specifies that IROs should:

- be social work professionals with at least 5 years post qualifying front line practice and supervisory/ managerial experience
- ensure that children's views are heard, they are aware of their rights and entitlements and receive relevant services and support
- consult children before reviews to keep their views and input central to the whole review process (particularly during the review meeting)
- maintain over-view and promote meaningful consultation with parents, carers and others with significant involvement with the child and ensure they are involved and their views have been taken into account in relation to the care planning and review
- monitor the local authority's management of the child's case at any time
- attend any significant meeting or other type of review for the child
- identify and challenge drift, delay and underperformance and make attempts to resolve them in a timely manner

3. The team

The team of Cared for IROs in Cheshire East is made up of 9 IROs and a Safeguarding Manager. There are 6, female IROs and 3 males, 2 IROs are from the BME community, one IRO is of mixed heritage and the remaining 6 are White British. In relation to the children in care we serve this provides a diverse team, at the time of writing 85% of cared for children are white British with 15% from other ethnic backgrounds including 3% of mixed heritage backgrounds. Currently 53% of cared for children are male and 47% female and so in this respect the team are not representative of the population they serve, having only 33% male IROs however this reflects the gender balance of the workforce from which the team is drawn and would not be exceptional in comparison with other Local Authorities.

The team are settled and made up of 8 permanent members of staff including 2 members of the team employed in their roles for over 5 years, one for 3 years and the remainder for over a year, additionally there is one agency worker currently covering a post whilst an IRO is acting up as Interim Safeguarding Manager. One contract has been changed from fixed term to permanent this year following a business case put forward due to increased cared for children numbers and need for increased oversight to support improved practice across the service.

At the end of the business year in March 2019 caseloads of IROs were above the recommended level given the geographical size of the authority and numbers placed outside the borough. Caseloads ranged at this time from 60-85 across the team. As a response to a business case was put forward to Senior Managers, one contract was changed from fixed term to permanent and a further half time post was added to the team at the end of the financial year as well as an additional half time administration post to support the team.

4. Overview

What has gone well?

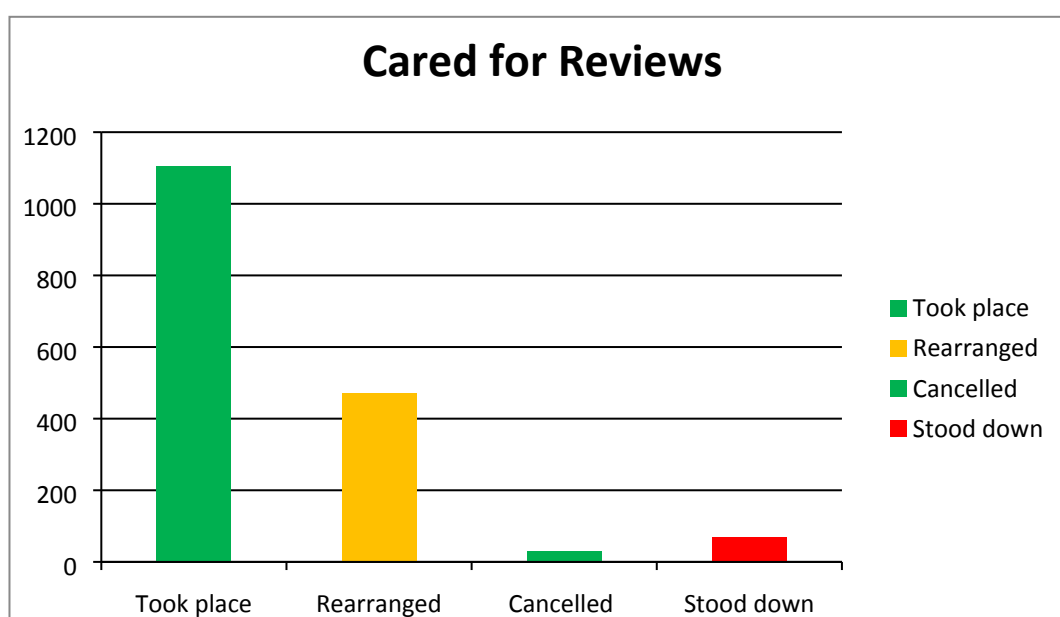
- We have chaired **1481** cared for reviews and pathway plan reviews this year
- We have arranged initial reviews for 151 children and young people who became cared for in the past year.
- On average over the year, 98% of children over the age of 4 participated in their reviews in the past year.
- Over the year an average of 60% of children over the age of 4 attended their reviews
- On average 61% of care leavers over the age of 18 attended their reviews each month - this is positive as engagement of our care leavers as adults is often more difficult as they are adults and have their own commitments and so reviews have to be held when they are available to attend.
- We have recruited 2 new permanent members and our team will grow to 9.5 members in August 2019.
- We have also secured additional business support through an additional post and are in the process of streamlining our internal processes through a Lean Review to make them more effective and to ensure GDPR compliance
- We have been awarded the Investing in Children Award for the 2nd year running, we are the first service within Children's Social Care to achieve this award for a consecutive year
- We have re-developed our consultation forms working with Cared for Children in My Voice to produce a child friendly and short consultation document for children under 16.
- We have developed the review process that reflects the Signs of Safety model to ensure child and family friendly reviews that children enjoy attending. These have included interactive reviews using post it notes and white board paper as well as holding some themed reviews such as a football review and a baking review.
- All C4 IROs have attended Signs of Safety Training. Seven members of the team are now Practice Leads with development sessions taking place every other month led by a practice lead to progress the model in the review process
- We are now writing to children with a record of their meeting in the form of a letter to them rather than sending them formal minutes. This has received positive feedback so far.

What are we worried about?

- The percentage of reviews that needed to be rearranged and stood down is high with just under half of all reviews either being rearranged or stood down. In total 73 (5%) reviews and pathway reviews were stood down with 633 (43%) being rearranged, this is an increase on the previous year and appears to be related in part to some lack of stability in the social

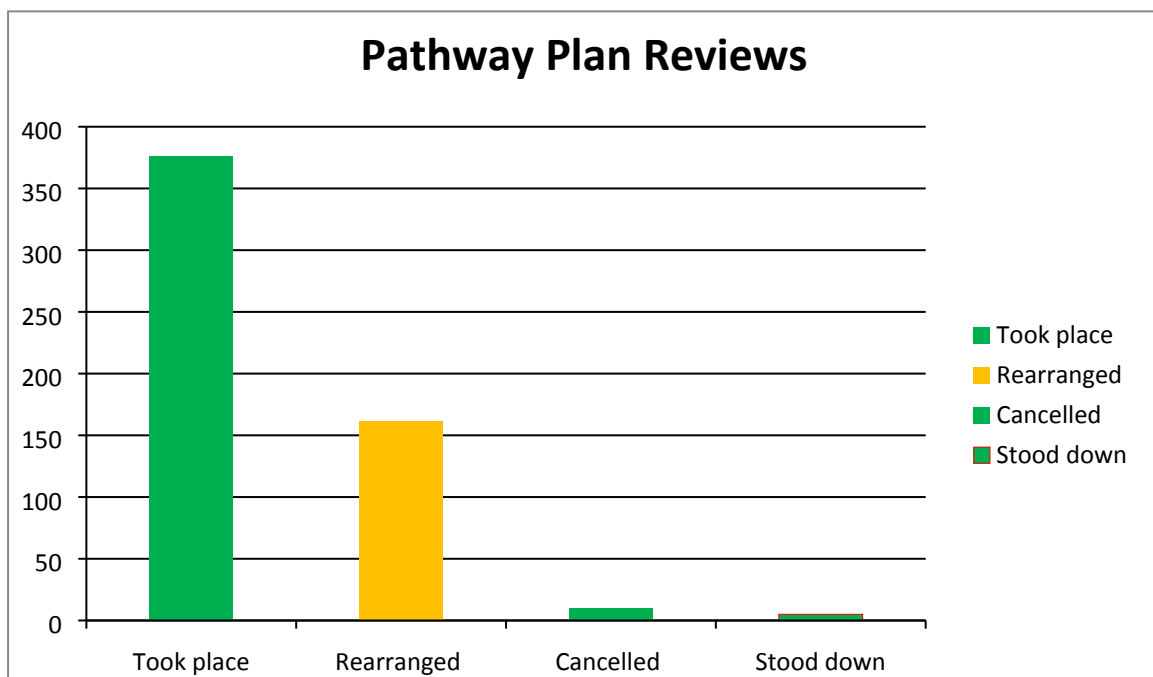
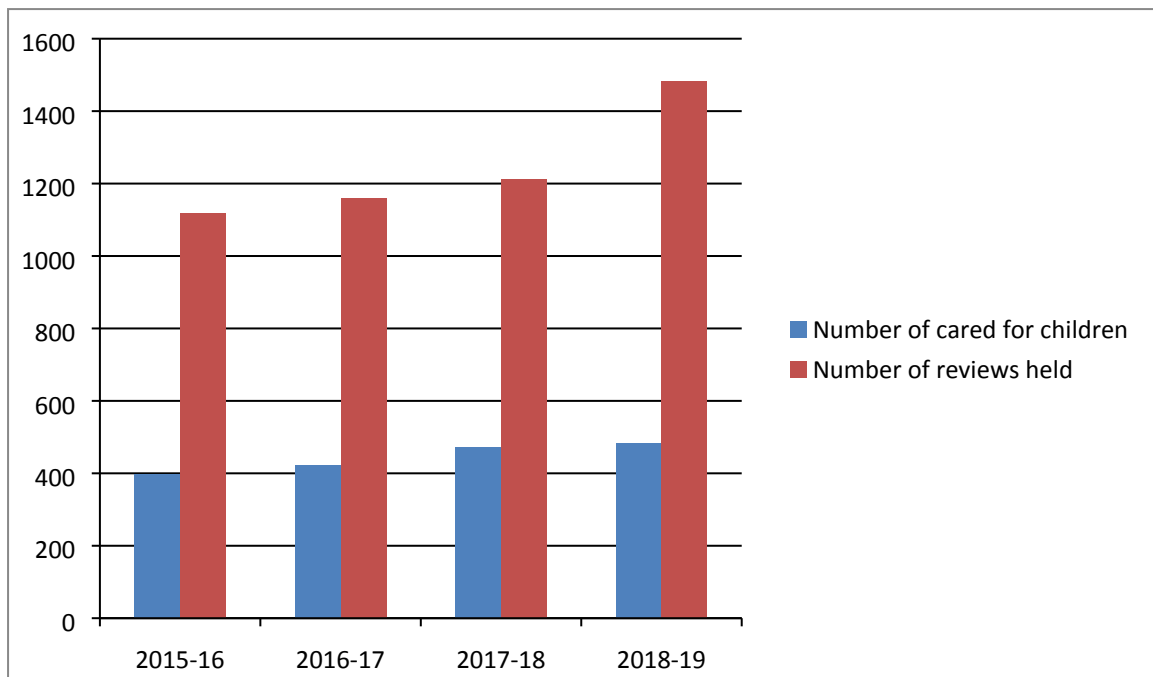
work teams, a busy year with more cared for children and care leavers and therefore more review meetings.

- There is a fuller report and analysis on Practice Alerts in the next section of the report which provides information about the reasons for practice alerts being raised. There are some clear recurring themes; 61% of practice alerts raised in 2018-2019 via the Dispute Resolution Process were due to lack of a care plan being updated and available prior to the review. This issue then leads to reviews being stood down and means care plans are not being shared in a timely way with children and families ahead of their reviews. Despite a busier year for both social care and the IRO team the figures are not dissimilar to last year.
- The number of children cared for in Cheshire East peaked this year in November and December 2018 at 509 this led to considerable pressure on the IRO service as caseloads increased beyond levels to where we could sustain standards, this impacts on the ability for the IRO team to maintain oversight as well as impacting on time spent on team development, audits and specialisms.
- Whilst attendance at reviews increased for over 4's this year we would like this to improve further as the goal would be for a much higher percentage of children (80% plus) to be attending their meeting. This is a focus for 2019/20.
- Almost 45% of our cared for children are placed outside the Cheshire East borough currently. This includes very young children in care proceedings. Aside from the inevitable impact this has on the children in terms of living away from their community and school moves, there is also an impact on the services involved with those children in terms of distance to be travelled. This continues to be a concern in respect of service delivery both in terms of allowing the IROs sufficient time for oversight of their cases, the impact it has on visits to children, and maintaining meaningful relationships, as well as the inevitable cost of travel both in terms of time and expense. The principle would always be for the child to remain within their community.



- Of the total 1,674 review meetings planned to take place in this business year 28% had to be rearranged to a new date.
- 115 Initial Review meetings were held within the year relating to 151 children
- 163 more reviews took place in this business year compared to 2017-18
- Just over 4% of the total cared for reviews were stood down which is a low number and an improvement on previous years
- Cancellations represent just 1.7% of activity and are rare as they relate to when a review has been arranged but the legal order changes so a child is no longer cared for child. For example a child returning home following a period of accommodation under Section 20.

Review activity comparison last 4 years



- There were 553 Pathway Plan meetings planned for the year and of those 29% were rearranged.
- Only a small percentage 0.1% were stood down
- Review meetings are not cancelled and this figure reflects either a change in legal status or a young person turning 21 at which point our service no longer reviews their plan and a pre-planned meeting being taken out of the calendar for those reasons
- 105 more Pathway Plan review meetings were held this year compared to 2017-18.

Reviews held in timescales

In the past business year 90.1% of reviews have been held in timescales. This is in line with the percentage achieved in the last business year 2018-19 but is in the context of a peak in children cared for by Cheshire East meaning increased caseloads and a higher number of reviews held.

The reasons for reviews falling out of timescales are varied, these include:

- Foster carers going on holiday and forgetting a forthcoming review meaning it has to be rearranged for their return.
- Unavailability of the social worker or the IRO due to absence caused by illness, reviews are not able to be covered by people who do not know the child.
- Insufficient time to rearrange a review within timescales due to the availability of the social worker or the IRO.
- Simple miscalculation of the days, where a review was rearranged or stood down the IRO has counted days from the date the review eventually took place rather than the original statutory date.

Many of the above are resolvable issue and possibly down to poor planning however they are also due to understandable difficulties caused by a high level of meetings, work load pressure on both IROs and the Social Work teams all leading to reduced ability to be flexible.

Series of Meetings

The care planning regulations allow for reviews to be completed as a series of meetings where necessary. This might be to allow parents to take part in a separate meeting or due to parental conflict. At times it may be necessary to hold the review with the child and foster carer as one meeting and then meet parents separately. Other reasons for holding a series of meetings may be due to awaiting an expert report in those cases in proceedings where the review is held in timescales but the report is due a few days after the statutory date. Holding the review as a series of meetings allows 20 working days to complete the review process.

Figures for number and percentage of reviews held as series of meetings 2018-2019

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
No.	8	10	12	10	5	14	17	11	4	10	13	4
% total reviews	10%	13%	15%	14%	7%	18%	11%	11%	5%	12%	15%	5%

The percentage of reviews held as series of meetings has fluctuated over the past year and at times has been 15% of all meetings. The concern is that some meetings held as a series are due to poor planning as it might have been possible to have a single meeting with preparation of both child and parents for the meeting or to have held a single meeting with parents attending part of the meeting. The high figures experienced in 2018 are a concern in terms of the impact on both social work and IRO time during a period when number of children cared for was high.

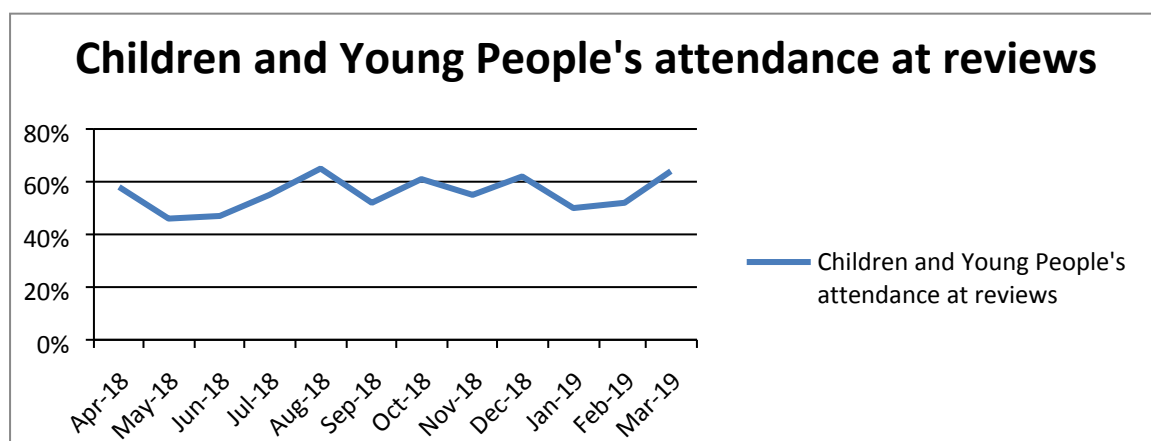
Participation in reviews

We continue to have a high rate of participation from children and young people's in their reviews consistently achieving between 97-100% throughout the year this is an area of continued improvement as in the last business year participation was an average of 92%.

Participation can be through completion of consultation documents, providing views via an advocate or their carers or attendance at the review meeting.

We remain concerned at the figure we are achieving for actual attendance at the review and have set ourselves a high target to improve this as currently whilst it is an improving picture from previous years, we currently achieve between 50- 65%. This has to be a focus for improvement across all operational teams as well as the IROs.

We have set ourselves a target of 75% to be achieved as part of our Team Plan for 2019-20 and a group of IROs are working with others across Children's Services including Social workers, supervising social workers, foster carers and residential placements to see if collectively we can improve this figure and replicate the good practice seen in the cases where children attend and enjoy their review.



Consultation

As part of the review process we are required to consult with the child or young person, their parents, their carers as well as education and health or any significant agency involved in their care plan. Figures for return of consultation documents remain low and do not necessarily represent the true picture. For example whilst foster carers may not always complete the consultation form they attend the review and will report verbally instead. We are looking at this area as part of our Business Plan for this year to focus on improving the number of consultations received where there is no attendance, and working with partners to look at what would make this an easier and more effective process.

Recorded Invites/Consultation Forms sent out					
Young Person	Health	Education	Parents	Foster Carer/Care	Other
680	536	641	695	679	447
Recorded Consultation Forms received					

Young Person	Health	Education	Parents	Foster Carer/Care	Other
85 (13%)	164 (31%)	249 (38.8%)	87 (12.5%)	197 (29%)	29 (6.4%)

5. Dispute Resolution and Practice Alerts

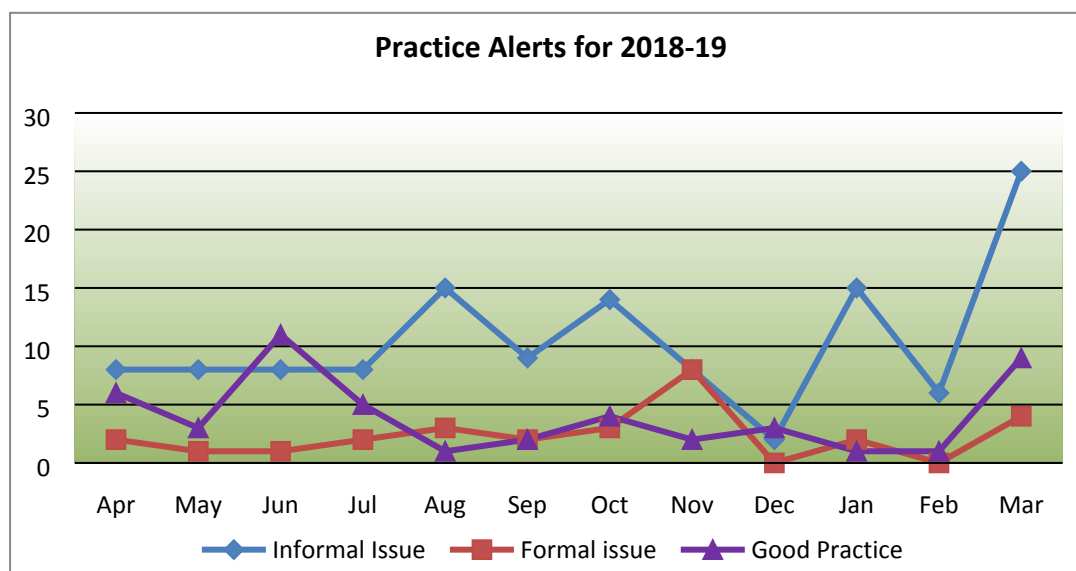
A key part of the IRO role is to be able to challenge effectively when practice falls below agreed standards, where regulations are not being followed and of course where there is disagreement with the care plan put forward. These issues all potentially adversely impact on the outcomes for the child.

The following information outlines the activity of the Cared for IROs for the past year in respect of disputes raised and practice alerts issued.

During 2018/19 the Cared for IROs issued:

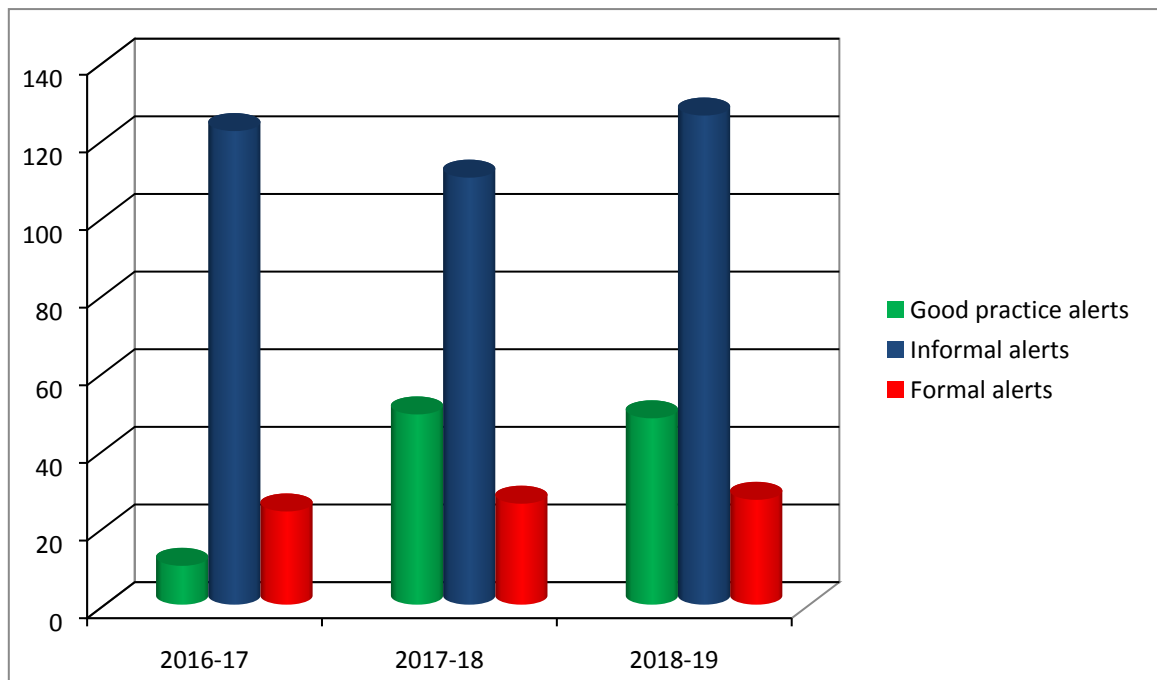
- 153 and 48 good practice notifications. The Practice Alerts were made up of :
- 126 (63%) Informal alerts
- 27 (18%) Formal dispute escalations
- 48 (24%) Good Practice Notifications were also made

The full data breakdown for each month is represented in the graph below:



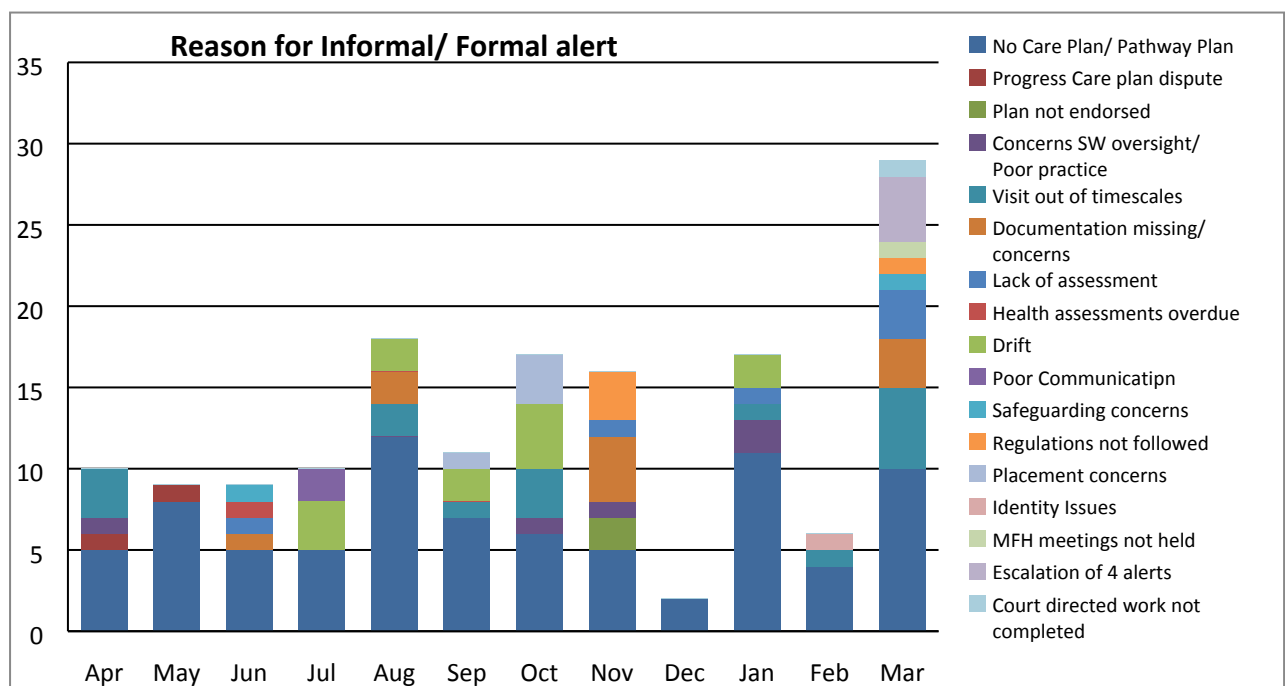
The graph above illustrates that most alerts are raised by the C4 IROs are at an informal level and resolved with only 13.4% of them escalating to formal dispute resolution over the year. Good practice notifications represent almost a quarter of all alerts raised.

Comparison with previous years



There is clearly some consistency in the data this year compared to last year with only a marginal increase in informal alerts however the breakdown would indicate more informal alerts for lack of updated care plans

Themes



Informal Alerts

The most common reasons for practice issues related to no care plan or pathway plan being prepared and updated 3 days ahead of the review in line with care planning regulations. This is also the most common reason for reviews being stood down by the IRO as the child and family have not

had the opportunity for the care plan to be shared with them ahead of the review. This has been an area of focus for the IROs to highlight practice that the service wants to improve so will account for the level of alerts raised in respect of this.

In total 61% of all 126 informal alerts in 2018-2019 related to the lack of a care plan or pathway plan as the main reason for the alert being raised. Whilst improvement was seen between September and December this was not sustained and there remains variable practice. The next most common reason for raising an alert was due to statutory visits not being recorded as completed or out of timescales this was noted in 16 (12%) alerts raised. Additionally other themes for informal alerts are the lack of required documentation, this can relate to missing court documents for the IRO to see or completed Placement with Parent assessments as well as the IRO being unable to locate up to date health assessments on the child's record.

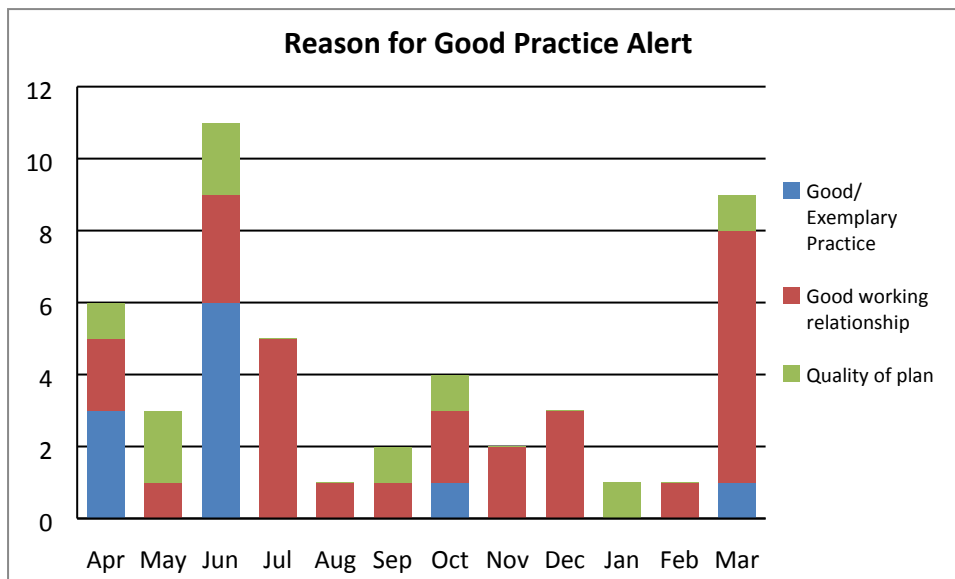
Alerts relating to Safeguarding issues have been rare this year with only one mentioning a Missing from Home Trigger meeting had not been held and another escalated for another safeguarding issue where action was needed. This shows positive improvement.

Formal Alerts

It is positive that only 13.4% of all alerts raised were escalated to Formal Alerts in the past year. This indicates that in most cases where there is a disagreement or concern raised the matter is resolved between the IRO and the Team Manager and does not need to be escalated. A small percentage of formal alerts are raised straightaway at formal level where discussion with the Team Manager has indicated an issue they considered related to service issues or a decision made at a more senior level. Dispute resolution at a formal level is also raised if the IRO is unable to agree to the Final Care plan put forward at conclusion of proceedings.

Most formal alerts in the past year have been raised due to concerns of drift or poor practice that has led to drift. Out of the 27 formal alerts raised 11 (41%) related to this issue. Quality of assessment and compliance with regulations was the second most common reason for raising a formal alert or for an alert to escalate to a formal dispute level, this was noted in 8 alerts, this has involved a number of cases where Placement with Parent's regulations had not been completed and resolution was reached once this assessment was completed. In total 4 formal alerts were raised due to IRO disagreement with the final care plan. It should be noted disputes are resolved prior to Final Evidence being filed often following the provision of additional information or time being agreed for additional information to be obtained. There have been no instances of escalation to Cafcass by the IRO team in the past year.

Good practice notifications



In total there were 48 separate good practice notifications this year. The themes relate to 3 main reasons, a good working relationship with the child or family evident in 30 cases, exemplary practice in advocating for the child in 11 cases and good examples of the child's care plan or pathway plan or a particularly good assessment in the remaining 7 cases. It is notable this year good practice alerts were made every month. However the IROs accept in a busy period with high case numbers the focus is sometimes more on issues to be resolved and not always on recognising good practice. This year quarter 4 brought the most good practice alerts across the year perhaps reflecting the introduction of Signs of Safety and more child centred practice being evidenced. It should also be noted, in many of the good practice notifications more than one reason is stated with good relationship and exemplary advocacy often mentioned.

What has been going well	What are we worried about	Future focus
<p>More than 60% of alerts raised are concluded at Informal dispute level. This means issues can be resolved between the IRO and the Team Manager and concluded within 5 days.</p> <p>If a review was adjourned due to no plan, a swift resolution allows the review to be rearranged swiftly.</p> <p>There is a good understanding of the dispute resolution process and conversations take place readily between IROs and team managers</p> <p>Most alerts are made for a key single issue although may refer</p>	<p>A high percentage of informal alerts, 61% are due to care and pathway plans not being updated in a timely way for the review. This means at times the plan has not been shared with the child or young person in a planned way following a care planning meeting when the plan is normally updated. This percentage has increased since the last business year with 77 individual alerts raised about this issue compared to 43 in 2017-18.</p> <p>The child's plan is not "owned" by the child if they have not been involved in the update or had the plan shared with them by the Social Worker before</p>	<p>We have agreed at joint performance meetings this will remain an area of focus until we see increased practice improvement</p> <p>Signs of Safety is written in the child's voice and is aligned to the need for regular updates and it has been described as being much more about the "here and now" and we hope this will see an increase in plans being made ready for review once the format has been put in place for every child.</p> <p>Recruitment across the service is completed and it is hoped stability, reduced caseloads and increased oversight by Team</p>

<p>to other concerns but categories of alerts are reduced from previous years with more focus on areas of concern.</p> <p>Generally Formal Alerts represent about only 10% of all alerts raised each quarter with the exception of one very busy quarter this year</p> <p>Most alerts do not escalate. Those alerts escalated have done so for good reason where concerns have primarily been in relation to drift and delay</p> <p>There is a good understanding in proceedings to ensure discussion about final evidence with the IRO and for their views to be included in the SWET.</p> <p>Good practice notifications remain at a similar level as last year this would indicate some consistency of good practice.</p> <p>It is noted that good practice alerts are across the service. They often indicate good relationships with the child and their family as well as some instances of exemplary practice in advocating for the child.</p> <p>Disputes have been resolved in the dispute resolution process without the need for escalation to Cafcass.</p>	<p>their review. Whilst the figure above relates to the percentage of alerts raised for this matter the percentage of cases this applies to may be higher as there is always the discretion of the IRO to go ahead with the review if it would be detrimental to the child to adjourn.</p> <p>If there is no updated plan the review has to be adjourned, this can cause delay and drift.</p> <p>Just over 40% of escalations have been about drift and delay this has sometimes been about Social workers having competing demands or about Social Workers changing, meaning assessments have had to be extended or actions have been delayed.</p> <p>Timescales add pressure in court proceedings and the 10 days to resolve a formal dispute is not always available – discussion about likely final care plans need to start early. It needs to be understood that the IRO has to see all evidence that informed the plan.</p> <p>The number of good practice alerts raised is not representative of spoken experience and IROs need to ensure they record good practice notifications as readily as they do Informal alerts. It is noted in a very busy period i.e. when we had over 500 cared for children and over 200 care leavers, the focus is often on what is worrying us rather than the positives.</p>	<p>Managers will ensure fewer escalations due to drift.</p> <p>There is a good understanding in proceedings to ensure discussion about final evidence with the IRO and for their views to be included in the SWET. Legal are aware of need to include views and this is considered in filing meetings.</p> <p>IROs are being requested to ensure at least 2 good practice notifications a month in order to focus on this area. Good practice and Dispute alerts are discussed in joint performance meetings each month with a breakdown of reasons provided this will further impress upon the service to record good practice examples.</p>
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* Please note however for the data to be meaningful to the reader, alerts and notifications will not identify every good example of practice encountered by the IRO nor every circumstance where practice standards have not been met; what the data does provide is information on patterns and themes and a clear record of formal disputes resolved in the past business year.

Impact on children and young people: Case study examples from 2018-2019 – Cared for IROs

Example A – Case study - Informal Practice alert

Informal alert raised in respect of AR age 3 as on 1st May as there was no plan available for the review to be held that week. Discussion took place but the care plan was not completed until the day of the review meaning it had not been shared with the child or parent and had not provided the IRO any time to look at the plan ahead of the review. On this basis the review was adjourned the day before it was due to take place and rearranged for the 22nd May 2018 to allow the social worker time to share the plan. Due to the age of the child there was no impact on him in terms of preparation but he is placed with parents and so they were expecting the review and invitations had been sent out for the new date. The IRO was able to convene a new date within 20 days of the adjournment and invites had to be sent out again by the administration team in the Safeguarding Unit. In the response to the Informal Alert the Team Manager acknowledges practice that fell short of requirements and also confirmed a care planning meeting had not taken place and would be put in place before the care plan was updated again in time for the new review date and shared with the family. The review went ahead on the rearranged date. The positive impact of this alert led to a care planning meeting being held to provide a clear update to the care plan which of course led to a much more effective review and a review meeting where the parent felt fully informed of the plan and could impart this in an age appropriate way with their child.

Example B – Case study – Formal Dispute Resolution

A formal dispute resolution was escalated in July 2018 for SA a CWD aged 17. This was an escalation following an informal alert by the IRO in June due to concern for a lack of effective transition planning causing anxiety to the young person. The issue was escalated as the Team Manager had been unable to resolve the difficulty in progressing SA's transition plan as he approached 18 due to lack of progress with Adult Services actions. The Service Manager was able to take this escalation forward and progress the situation with the Adult Service Locality Manager who was keen to avert the escalation and acted to progress a plan for SA with health colleagues. The IRO expressed his views that the case had provided some learning in relation to the transition arrangements for young people in need of support of adult services and the intervention at Service Manager Level ensured a resolution was found and action taken by adult services as agreed. This alert highlighted a situation that required senior managers to effect change and prompted adult services to act when they understood that the IRO could escalate to Cafcass if services were not responding to the child's (as he was at the time) care needs.

Example C – Case Study – Good Practice Notification

Good practice notification for a case involving a young person who was previously an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child but had obtained right to remain status. The IRO acknowledges the Pathway Plan's quality which contains the young persons views and voice and had clearly been written with the young person alongside the PA and through an interpreter to provide an excellent example of a Pathway Plan with SMART outcomes, clear outline of the young person's lived experience and a plan in line with the young persons wishes and hopes for his future. Additionally providing the young person with a clear reference point in relation to his support and planned future support under the 21+ offer as well as contact details for support agencies he might find useful.

The Team Manager agreed to share the notification and feedback at his forthcoming team meeting.

6. The impact of the role of the IRO in Cheshire East

In a busy year there have been a number of case examples where the challenge of the IRO has led to positive outcomes for children and young people including instances where care plans have been disputed and the IRO dispute resolution process has enabled discussion to take place and the opportunity to pause and reflect on the decisions being made.

Through their independence and experience the IRO is able to step back and take a broader view on occasions. Their role is to ensure the child achieves the best outcomes but also care plan that is in line with their wishes and feelings. Hearing the voice of the child is therefore paramount to the review process.

Where a child wishes to challenge their care plan or indicates they are unhappy with aspects of their plan the IRO can direct a referral to the independent advocacy service (The Children's Society) to support the child or young person to challenge their plan and if required seek their own independent legal advice.

In many cases the Dispute Resolution process is seen to be effective in ensuring further dialogue between the social work teams and the IRO to reach an agreed resolution which meets the child's wishes and ensures the most positive outcomes.

Another important factor which can be seen in the examples below is the relationship that is formed between the child and the IRO who in many cases remains constant at times when social workers may have changed and in cases where the child or young person has fully understood the role of independence.

In the past year there have been a number of examples where IRO intervention has altered the outcome of the plans being made through professional challenge and discussion when needed. Through use of their experience, some professional curiosity leading to some pertinent questions and discussion held where plans have been adjusted or changed to promote better outcomes.

The intervention of the IRO is reflected on the child's record by recording of reviews, case records of consultations and discussions thus providing a clear footprint of the IRO.

An indication of the children where IRO challenge has had an impact are detailed in case examples below:

Child M

Child M

M was placed in the care of his Grandparents following his Mother being sectioned under the Mental Health Act. Care proceedings were concluding and the plan put forward was one of rehabilitation to Mother's care. The IRO challenged this decision raising a Formal Practice alert and highlighted the short period of time that had elapsed, the history of previous mental health deterioration and the impact of this on M. She also highlighted a number of unanswered questions from expert reports that whilst unanswered, indicated the high level of risk that might be presented if M returned to his Mother's. The social work team acknowledged the issues raised and after further court discussion with the Children's Guardian it was agreed the court timetable would be extended from the usual 26 weeks to allow further assessment of M's mother as well as further time for her to evidence stability in her mental health and to request further information from the medics involved. The plan has now concluded, all agreed gaps in evidence have been narrowed and there is a

clearer period of stability demonstrated. The plan is for M to remain with his mother under a supervision order. The IRO role in this case ensured greater scrutiny of the evidence being placed before the court and some key questions to be raised to ensure a positive outcome is achieved that can be sustained.

Child Q

Child Q presented as an unaccompanied asylum seeking child. She was accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 by the Local Authority. At her dental examination concern was raised about her age by the dentist. This led to the Home Office being informed she was not a child and they transported her to alternative accommodation. The IRO challenged the plan for Q and raised a formal practice alert, she had established that the British Dental Association is prevented from making assessments of age in this way and so she queried the evidence for contacting the Home Office. She also challenged the lack of opportunity given to Q to share any re-assessment of her age and to support her in anyway to obtain advocacy to seek legal advice and appeal her situation whilst still supported by the Local Authority rather than focusing on ending her support.

This challenge also had an impact service wide in relation to USAC seeking support as it highlighted the original age assessment was not Merton Compliant. This has led to the policy in respect of age assessments and the support of USAC in Cheshire East being updated accordingly to ensure improved practice in future.

Q subsequently obtained her legal advice and challenged the Local Authority through her solicitor to obtain an independent age assessment, this was obtained and indicated she was under 18 and she since returned to Cheshire East to be supported as an unaccompanied child and continues to be reviewed by her IRO.

Child P

Child P is a baby born to one of our previously cared for children who we now support as a Care Leaver. Both Mother and baby were placed in foster care whilst assessments were completed during care proceedings which had been initiated due to concern that P's mother would not be able to care for her child independently.

At an early stage in proceedings, the IRO raised a formal dispute resolution when he noted no care planning meetings had taken place to fully involve all professionals available to support the success of a plan for the Mother to care for P independently. He raised concern that if the plan was not more coordinated it was essentially setting the mother up to fail and he highlighted the duty the Local Authority had to the Mother as a former cared for child and now a care leaver to be an effective parent.

It is clear following the formal alert and discussion with the Service Manager a more proactive stance was taken to ensure P could be successfully parented by her Mother. Using the Signs of Safety Model in the review a clear Trajectory was identified and the care plan utilised to ensure a network of support was being built to support them both.

The positive intervention by the IRO in this case has led to P successfully remaining in her Mother's care and now living as an independent family with a future plan to discharge the Care Order in relation to Child P.

Child R

The intervention of the IRO in respect of achieving positive outcomes was raised very early when Child R was still unborn. The mother of baby R was a child in care from a family with acrimonious relationships with Social Care. The IRO raised concern first informally but then formally that the Mother of Child R needed to be seen as independent from her family and given the opportunity to be supported to parent her child. She raised concern that the mother had not been fully advised of the planning for her unborn baby and was likely to present as oppositional to services as this was her experience as a child observed in her family home. The Mother had come into care very late but was clearly engaging in her placement and had indicated to her IRO her willingness to ensure her baby remained in her care.

In this case the IRO advocated well both for the child she reviewed but also for the rights of the unborn child to ensure both received a fair service and that social care ensuring her rights to be supported to parent her child and the additional effort that would need to be made to engage her in this process due to her own family history.

From the point of the alert, clear engagement was evidenced and a supportive Social worker ensured progress was made with R's mother continuing to engage and understand the reasoning for a care order being made in order to achieve her longer term goal. Good practice has been evident on this case subsequently and despite the fact R's Mother still a child herself she is parenting her well independently to date although still sharing responsibility under a care order with the Local Authority plans are being made to discharge the care order.

7. Progress on targets from 2017-18

Target	Progress made
Develop use of assistive technologies to support recording of reviews	Those IRO wishing to use the Dragon technology have been trained and provided with the technology. However currently we are unable to use this from home. Further enquiries are being made as this is a Local Authority issue with current VPN system
Improve number of Outcomes completed within 5 days	This figure was at 76% in 2017, 90% in 2018 but has slipped back to just under 80% this year and is a target area for continued improvement now we have a larger team
Reduction of disputes reaching formal level	In 2017-18 there were 30, this year 27 have escalated to formal level however this is in the context of increased numbers in care
Increase numbers of consultations returned from Health and Education colleagues and parents	This figure has decreased with only 12% return from parents and a 35% return from health and education colleagues. This is an area of work for our current business plan.

Develop joint performance meetings to focus on permanency and stability of cared for children and care leavers	Joint meetings are now taking place monthly with a focus on reduction of placement moves
Submit an application to renew our Investing in Children Award	This has been achieved and the IRO service is has retained this for a second year with the help and support of our cared for children
Joint work across service to improve SDQ scores for children and monitoring of this assessment	An IRO now sits on the Corporate Parenting Health work stream and this is an area they are monitoring.

8. Future plans and development

Target	What needs to happen?
Increase attendance and participation of children at reviews	<p>Working group of IROs to work across the service with social workers, supervising social workers and foster carers to improve attendance</p> <p>Use of Signs of Safety in reviews as a tool to create a more participatory review</p> <p>Development of Signs of Safety practice in the review process</p> <p>Increase IRO contact with children through reduction in cases to build relationships</p> <p>Review templates to record reviews to reduce time taken to record outcomes and the record of the review</p>
Increase return rate of consultation from parents and partner agencies	<p>Working group of IROs to work across the service with health and education colleagues to see what would improve response rates.</p> <p>To evaluate use of email consultations with parents with use of Egress</p> <p>To renew the current templates to ensure they are quick and easy to complete and user friendly</p>
Lean review of Invitation process	<p>To improve the number of invitations that are sent out for reviews by our service.</p> <p>To promote planning for reviews in the social work teams and improve practice in this area</p> <p>To remain GDPR compliant with information</p>

	To reduce time on this task for administration team
To seek feedback about our service from children, young people, parents and partner agencies	To arrange for a feedback exercise to be completed with support of administration team to seek verbal and written feedback about our service within an allotted time period before the year end
To continue to work with the operational teams to improve stability and reduce placement disruption	<p>Chairing disruption meetings</p> <p>Sharing learning from feedback</p> <p>Joint performance meetings</p> <p>Identifying at review if stability meetings need to take place</p>
To reduce the number of reviews rearranged and to ensure reviews for cared for children and care leavers are prioritised across the service	<p>To ensure any adjournments are for the benefit of the child</p> <p>To ensure effective planning and preparation for reviews by both IROs and Social Work team</p>

Karen Chan

Interim Safeguarding Manager

August 2019

OFFICIAL



INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS (CARED FOR CHILDREN)

ANNUAL REPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE 2018-2019

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IRO annual report for Children and Young People

1. Introduction

Every year the IRO team produce a report which is published and presented to the councillors of Cheshire East who are responsible for the services which support you if you are a cared for child or young person or a care leaver here in Cheshire East. This is a shorter, more interesting version of the report for you.

2. The role of your IRO

An Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is appointed to every child or young person who becomes cared for and our role is to make sure the Local Authority (Cheshire East) make sure you are well cared for and carries out all its duties to you as children who in their care.

Your IRO does this by:

- Holding cared for review meetings which you can attend and be involved in
- Speaking to you about your care plan, what you want to happen and what is important to you
- Making sure you have all that you need to keep you healthy, what you need to support you to have a good education or career and making sure you are staying in contact with your family network and keeping in touch with the people who matter to you
- Making sure that your views are heard and that your care plan reflects what you need and what you want to happen
- Making sure things happen on time and that people do what they say they will do following a review meeting
- Helping you to raise any concerns by making sure you have access to an Advocate or making sure you have access to Independent Visitor to visit you where you live.
- Raising concerns with your social workers and their managers when things are not going to plan or we do not agree that the plan is what is best for you.

3. Our team in Cheshire East

There are 10 IROs in our team in Cheshire East, 3 are men and 6 are women, you might know our names, Ian, Kevin, Victor, Lisa, Angela, Dawn, Allison, Karen and we have 2 Rachels!. You should be able to find your IRO and their contact details by following the link below:

<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/care-and-support-for-children/are-you-concerned-about-a-child/cheshire-east-consultation-service-cheecs/independent-reviewing-officers-contact-information.aspx>

IRO annual report for Children and Young People

4. What did we do in 2018-19?

What went well? 😊

- We chaired **1481** cared for reviews and pathway plan reviews this year – a lot of meetings!
- 151 children had their first review so have just become cared for by us
- 98% - that is nearly **all** of you, took part in your review in some way
- 60% of you aged under 18 attended your meeting, we would like this to be more please, so let your IRO know what would help you to come to your meeting
- 61% of you aged over 18 came to your meetings, again let us know what would make it better for you to attend, we can't do it as well without you
- We have two new IROs Dawn and Allison who joined the team this summer and we said goodbye to Lisa and Miranda
- We started using a consultation form designed with children in My Voice and we send out emoji stickers with this form for children and young people under 16. We are working on a new form for over 16's. let us know if you want to help design it
- We are trying to make your reviews more interactive to help you feel involved because it's your meeting! Please give your IRO any ideas you have.

What are we worried about? 😞

- We are worried your meetings get moved at short notice when social workers and IROs are busy and we need this to change
- We are worried you do not always see your care plan before your review and this needs to change as you need to be able to read your plan before your review meeting and be involved in writing your plan so we know you understand what will happen to care for you.
- We are worried that some children and young people do not like their review meetings and we want to change them so you want to attend your meetings. We would like to see at least 80% of you coming to your meetings if possible. Please let your IRO know what they could do to help you want to attend your meeting
- We are worried that so many children and young people are living too far from their families and this makes it more difficult for us to visit you regularly and this can also mean you have lots of changes to manage

5. How we can make a difference

It is very important for the IRO to make a difference to children and young people below are 2 examples of where we believe we have made a difference for the young people we review

Example 1.

J had a care plan that said the best thing was for her to go home to her Mum and Dad it seemed as though things were going well and Mum and Dad had made lots of changes. J knew her IRO quite well and asked to meet with him with her teacher, J told her IRO she was unhappy with her plan and told him about lots of things she was worried about. Her IRO asked why J could not tell her social worker, J told him her social worker was very new to her and she was not sure if she would tell her Mum and Dad how she felt. The IRO spoke with the social worker and agreed some more time would be spent with J so she could pass on her worries about going home. Once this happened J's plan was changed so J could stay with her foster carers and just spend time with Mum and Dad. This was what J wanted and after speaking to Mum and Dad again the social worker agreed this would keep J safe.

Example 2.

R was a cared for child who had a baby when she was 16 she grew up in a family who did not like to speak to social workers so she was not happy about social workers being involved in her baby. The IRO for her baby met with R and her carers and found that R was caring for her baby very well and although she was not happy with speaking to the social worker for her baby she understood why they were worried. The IRO for the baby challenged the care plan for the baby to be moved away from R and requested that more time and support be given as it was possible R could care for her baby long term and she just needed people to work and communicate with her in a different way. The social worker agreed that further support could be arranged but was worried this would not help however she agreed to ask the court for more time, R began to work with people more easily and continued to do well with her baby. The plan was changed and whilst she still has a social worker for her baby she had now moved to her own home with her baby.

6. Future plans**What needs to happen? 😊**

These are the main aims we have for this year and we hope to achieve this by April 2020.

- Improve your attendance at your reviews - we want more of you to want to come to your reviews as they are your meetings
- Improve our consultations – if you don't want to come to your review or if people close to you cannot come to the meeting, we want to make sure we know what they think about your care plan so we are trying to find new ways to collect people's views
- Improve your involvement in reviews - this year you nearly all took part in your review in some way but we would like you to tell your IRO what we can do to make this even better for you

IRO annual report for Children and Young People

- Improve invitations to reviews – we are hoping to make arranging your review quicker and easier for your social worker to make sure everybody you want to come to your review knows when it is taking place
- Finally, like last year, we will be speaking to some of you to see what you thought of your reviews and whether the changes we are making are working for you and what else you would like us to do!



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Working for a brighter future together

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 12 November 2019

Report Title: Unregulated Placements

Senior Officer: Mark Palethorpe, Acting Executive Director of People

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report has been written to consider the Council's use of unregulated placements for young people aged sixteen and over, which are generally known as 16+, supported, or semi-independent accommodation. In recent years there has been increasing national, political and press concern regarding the use of 16+ supported accommodation.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That Corporate Parenting Committee:

- 2.1.1. Note the contents of the unregulated placements report as set out in Appendix 1 and the recommendation to the Children's Minister to tighten regulations around 16+ accommodation.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. The purpose of this report is to provide reassurance regarding the use of 16+ supported accommodation in Cheshire East and some of the current challenges and support available for our cared for young people living in this type of accommodation. It also sets out next steps regarding the development of supported lodgings and Bespoke to strengthen our offer for this cohort of young people.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. Corporate Parenting Committee may not support the recommended approach to strengthen our 16+ offer and develop Bespoke. This could mean that vulnerable young people were at an increased level of risk.

5. Background

- 5.1. The use of 16+ supported accommodation is increasing nationally for young people over the age of 16. There has been political and press concern regarding the risk to vulnerable young people living in this provision. Currently, unregulated provision is not subject to any regulatory framework.
- 5.2. In Cheshire East the use of 16+ accommodation is also increasing. There is a range of specifically commissioned provision. The accommodation used by our cared for young people is subject to internal quality assurance processes similar to those we would use for our cared for children living in children's homes.
- 5.3. There are a number of areas of good practice in Cheshire East including Ignition Panel and the supported lodgings scheme. There are plans to improve the level of support offered to our most vulnerable young people through the development of Bespoke.
- 5.4. The contents of the report will also be presented to the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership following a request for assurance regarding our approach to 16+ accommodation for cared for young people. This followed the recent national political and press interest.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

- 6.1.1. There is a range of legislation and statutory guidance that sets out the role of the local authority in respect of cared for children and care leavers. There is currently no legal requirement for 16+ accommodation to be regulated if "support" and not "care" is being provided.

6.2. Finance Implications

- 6.2.1. Bringing children into the care of the local authority represents a significant cost for the Council and growth in the base budget has been approved in recent years based on the increasing levels of demand and

complexity of need as well as the priority of achieving appropriate outcomes.

6.3. Policy Implications

6.3.1. A letter has been written to the Children's minister recommending that a regulatory framework for 16+ accommodation is introduced.

6.4. Equality Implications

6.4.1. All children and young people have a right to be treated equally and have their disability, gender, ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic needs met. As corporate parents for children and young people in care and care leavers, it is essential that the Council is able demonstrate that it considers equality implications in all decisions made in relation to cared for children and care leavers.

6.5. Human Resources Implications

6.5.1. There are no human resource implications from this report.

6.6. Risk Management Implications

6.6.1. Cared for children and care leavers over the age of 16 are a particularly vulnerable group for whom there are a number of risks, including poor outcomes in education and training, health, safeguarding and transition into adulthood.

6.7. Rural Communities Implications

6.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

6.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

6.8.1. This report sets out the implications of 16+ accommodation for cared for children and care leavers over the age of 16.

6.9. Public Health Implications

6.9.1. Cared for children and care leavers are more at risk of poor health outcomes. Health services need to be targeted to ensure that they meet the needs of this group of children and young people.

6.10. Climate Change Implications

6.10.1. There are no climate change implications.

7. Ward Members Affected

- 7.1.1. Although the number of Cheshire East cared for children and young people is relatively small, they are a vulnerable cohort, who live across Cheshire East and in other local authority areas.

8. Consultation & Engagement

- 8.1. Key stakeholders, including cared for children and young people and care leavers are regularly consulted on the development of accommodation provision and services.

9. Access to Information

- 9.1. Not applicable.

10. Contact Information

- 10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

Name: Jacquie Sims

Job Title: Director of Children's Social Care

Email: Jacquie.sims@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Report to	Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership
Date of report	11 th October 2019
Author and Title	Steve Nevitt, Service Manager Resources: Unregulated Accommodation for Children and Young People

1. Purpose of the Report
<p>This report has been written to consider the Council's use of unregulated placements for young people aged sixteen and over which are generally known as 16+, supported, or semi-independent accommodation.</p> <p>Background:</p> <p>In recent years, the availability and use of unregulated accommodation have risen significantly and it is an area in which there has been a degree of confusion about exactly what is allowed in law. Indeed, some of Ofsted's own correspondence has used terminology interchangeably, for example they have also used the phrase 'unregulated setting' to describe time limited activity-based crisis and emergency placements in temporary accommodation such as bunkhouses and narrowboats. We tend to use provision such as this on one or two occasions a year only and therefore it will not be considered in any detail here. As there has been a great deal of press and political interest about supported accommodation over the past year or more, it would be helpful to briefly outline the regulatory position at the outset; in a Blog post in July 2019, Yvette Stanley, Ofsted's National Director for Social Care wrote:</p> <p><i>Many people are unsure what we mean by unregulated and unregistered provision, and often confuse the two. They're different things.</i></p> <p>Unregulated provision is allowed in law. This is when children (usually over the age of 16) need support to live independently rather than needing full-time care. Ofsted do not regulate this type of provision. <i>It should be used as a stepping stone to independence, and only ever when it's in a child's best interests. For many children, it's the right choice. Some children do not want to live with foster parents or live in a children's home. For some unaccompanied asylum-seeking children this can be the right option too, but not for all.</i></p> <p>Unregistered provision is when a child who's being provided with some form of 'care' is living somewhere that is not registered with Ofsted. This is illegal. Once a provider delivers a care element as well as accommodation, they must register as a children's home. It's an offence not to.</p> <p><i>What does 'care' mean? It is not defined in law. It is not just about the age of the child, although that's a factor. It is about a child's vulnerability and the level of help that they need. If a child does need care, then the service they're getting is very likely to need registration as a children's home. Certainly, if children are under constant supervision then this is likely to be 'care'.</i></p> <p>In its 'Introduction to Children's Homes: a children's social care guide to registration' published in July 2018, Ofsted included a helpful checklist to assist in the differentiation of 'care' and 'support'; we use this routinely in our various forums and it is included as an appendix.</p>

2.	What's working well?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cheshire East has adopted an innovative approach to sourcing placements in supported accommodation through the Ignition Panel, a name that was chosen by a group of our young people. The panel was set up in January 2016 to give Cared for Children and Care Leavers more choice and ownership with regard to their accommodation arrangements; information from young people had identified a view that decisions were too often '<i>made about us rather than with us</i>'. The Ignition Panel therefore brings together a variety of accommodation providers, social landlords and the housing department with Cheshire East's Commissioning Team so that any gaps in provision can be identified and addressed. The young person is encouraged to attend the panel to explain what they want for their future and services can then outline what they offer; following this, arrangements are made to visit providers so that young people can make informed choices about where they are going to live with their social worker or personal advisor. The Council currently commissions supported accommodation and independent living for our Cared for Children and Care Leavers aged 16 and over. The initial three year term of the contract for P3 to operate supported accommodation from Watermill House in Macclesfield ends on the 31st March 2020, as does the contract for supported accommodation, emergency beds, taster flats and dispersed properties via Crewe YMCA. Although these arrangements have proved effective in supporting our young people, a decision to recommission the service was taken at Cabinet on 10th September with a view to increasing the flexibility and scope of our offer; a full report from the Head of Children's Commissioning about this project is available on the Council's website. Although this is not always a straightforward area in which to work, there is a sense that 'we know what we're doing' in relation to unregulated placements. We are confident that we are operating on the right side of the regulations and wherever there has been any doubt about this, we have adopted an open and transparent approach with our Ofsted HMI. In a small number of cases, where placements in supported accommodation have not been meeting the needs of individual young people, we have moved them back into residential or foster placements. Providers of unregulated placements are subject to a similar Quality Assurance process as the independent children's homes that we use and again in a small number of cases, this has led to young people being moved or a decision not to use a particular project again. We are also diligent in completing risk assessments of these placements, a matter that was raised in our last full Ofsted inspection in 2015.
3.	What we are worried about?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much of the press and political attention referred to above has raised significant concerns about local authorities' use of unregulated provision. There have been longstanding calls for registration and inspection including for example the 2015 Children's Society report '<i>On your own now: the risks of unsuitable accommodation for older teenagers</i>'. More recently, Anne Longfield, the Children's Commissioner for England has added her voice to the calls

for regulation and as recently as last week, she issued all local authorities with a statutory data request in relation to their use of such provision for Cared For Children. Disappointingly perhaps, the then Children's Minister Nadhim Zahawi told the BBC's Newsnight programme in July that whilst he wanted to eliminate a 'rogue element' in some 16+ and supported accommodation, full regulation 'would be a knee-jerk reaction'.

- Our use of unregulated provision has risen significantly over the past 12 months; whilst some of this can be attributed to the ongoing spontaneous arrival of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (many of whom find that providers such as MoCoCo House in Middlewich and Watermill House in Macclesfield meet their needs effectively) this is by no means the only explanation. It is of particular concern that former residents of children's homes are over-represented in unregulated placements, as are young people aged 16 and 17 who present as homeless.

	C4C	Supported Accm	%
Oct 19	516	35	6.8
Oct 18	495	16	3.2
Oct 17	466	17	3.6
Oct 16	398	11	2.8

- By its very nature, unregulated provision can be subject to people seeking to bend the rules, if not being prepared on occasion to operate completely outside of them. Ofsted has been paying attention to this issue of late and we receive notifications from time to time stating that they have visited a 16+ project and concluded that it was being run as an unregistered (and therefore illegal) children's home. Some local authorities also appear to overlook their obligation to consider if a placement can meet their young person's specific needs, and we have recently had to contact senior managers elsewhere to invite them to re-think their care-plans. In two cases, the young people were particularly vulnerable, had no connections to this area of any kind and almost immediately found themselves at risk of significant harm; following some joint work with our local Police, both were eventually moved, in one case to a psychiatric unit in Essex, the other to a secure unit in Scotland.
- Whilst many of our young people enjoy reasonably settled periods and experiences in supported accommodation, there is a small cohort who move around from one provider to another with an alarming level of regularity. If we are being truly honest, this sort of provision struggles to pass the *'Would I leave my child there?'* test and few people reading this report would be prepared to see their own 16 or 17 year old son or daughter living in an unregulated placement of this kind.

4. What needs to happen?

- In Cheshire East we are fortunate to have a range of 16+ providers with whom we generally enjoy positive working relationships; their managers and staff are clearly dedicated to the work and to delivering good outcomes for our young people. At the same time, it must concern us all that the extent of the care and support that they can provide is limited in law. We also know that there are other organisations operating in this sector who are prepared

to offer unsuitable placements at high cost to vulnerable young people from elsewhere (in one of the cases referenced above for example, the home area was more than 200 miles away) which are almost certainly in breach of the regulations. In these circumstances, the only defensible position for us to adopt is to back the calls from Anne Longfield and others for registration and inspection of 16+ and supported accommodation.

- Until then we must ensure that opportunities created by developments such as the re-tendering of our contract for supported accommodation result in a wide range of high quality provision that delivers positive outcomes for our young people and value for money to the Council.
- We need to use the Bespoke Care Hub Project (our new children's homes commission) to improve the journey out of residential care for our most vulnerable young people. The Government is due to publish the outcome of its 'Staying Close' pilot projects in March next year which we will be able to use as Bespoke moves from its initial stage of establishing stable homes to the wider phases of the project.
- Within this, there is probably already scope to increase our use of placements in supported lodgings in which young people are able to develop a key attachment relationship with a carer; there are currently four vacancies in the service and I understand that a number of new hosts will be available in the near future.
- With the assistance of our partner agencies, we will continue to monitor the local market for supported accommodation and where necessary, challenge colleagues in other authorities who have made what we believe to be unsuitable placements; this includes being prepared to report providers to Ofsted where there are clear breaches of the Children's Homes Regulations.

Appendix: Ofsted Guidance: Supported Accommodation or Care?

Criteria	Yes?	No?
Can young people go out of the establishment without staff permission?	Supported accommodation	Care
Do young people have full control of their own finances?	Supported accommodation	Care
Do young people have control over what they wear and of the resources to buy clothes?	Supported accommodation	Care
Are young people in charge of meeting all of their health needs, including such things as arranging GP or specialist health care appointments? Are young people in full control of their medication?	Supported accommodation (note that young people may ask for advice and help on their health, but if decisions rest with the young person, the establishment is not providing care.)	Care

Criteria	Yes?	No?
Do staff have any access to any medical records?	Care	Supported accommodation
Can young people choose to stay away overnight?	Supported accommodation (note that being expected to tell someone if they are going to be away overnight does not indicate providing care, but needing to ask someone's permission does.)	Care
Is there a sanctions policy that goes beyond house rules and legal sanctions that would be imposed on any adult?	Care	Supported accommodation
If the establishment accommodates both adults and young people, do those under 18 have any different supervision, support, facilities or restrictions?	Care	Supported accommodation
Are there regularly significant periods of time when young people are on the premises with no direct staff supervision?	Supported accommodation	Care
Do staff have any responsibility for aftercare once a young person has left?	Care (note that some supported accommodation services will offer some support to help young people get established in their next accommodation – this is not care.)	Supported accommodation
Does the establishment's literature promise the provision of care or relate to specific care support provided to all residents?	Care	Supported accommodation
Does the establishment provide or commission a specialist support service, which forms part of the main function of the establishment?	Care	Supported accommodation

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Working for a brighter future together

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 12 November 2019

Report Title: Corporate Parenting Update Report

Senior Officer: Mark Palethorpe, Acting Executive Director of People

1. Report summary

- 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. Recommendation/s

- 2.1. Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to:
 - 2.1.1. Note the contents of the report.
 - 2.1.2. Complete the Proforma at Appendix 1 in relation to Elected Member Options for Corporate Parenting Engagement; and
 - 2.1.3. Consider taking part in the November Children's Rights Month challenges set out at Appendix 2.

3. Reasons for Recommendation/s

- 3.1. The Corporate Parenting Committee is an advisory group to the Cabinet and, as such, needs to be aware of any national or local issues that are likely to impact on cared for children and care leavers. The Corporate Parenting Committee needs to be able to scrutinise and challenge performance to improve outcomes for cared for children and young people.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. None; this is an update report.

5. Background

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

6. Pledge 1 - Being a Good Corporate Parent

Star Celebrations update

- 6.1. The Star Celebration Day planning is progressing well and we are now meeting fortnightly to ensure that the day runs smoothly. The celebration will take place this year on 24th November 2019 at Tatton Park. Corporate Parenting Committee members are encouraged to attend the event. The theme for the day is pirates and princess and many of the staff are dressing up this year to add to the ambiance. We have had support from Stockyard North, a prop hire company, who are supporting our event by providing pirate and princess themed props to use for the day. They are delivering and setting these up for us free of cost. Activities on the day for young people include; face painting, arts and crafts, slime making, willow weaving, hair braiding, soft play, sports activities, treasure hunt, African drumming, photo booth and lots more. The aim of the day is to celebrate the success and achievements of all our cared for children over the past 12 months. It's a really good opportunity for our young people to see their social workers, managers and elected members to celebrate their achievements.

Participation update

- 6.2. Recent activity includes:
- Cared for Children and Care Leavers are currently involved in the recruitment process for the Fostering Service Manager.
 - The Participation team would like to invite members of the Corporate Parenting Committee to take part in a Reverse Take Over Challenge for November Children's Rights Month, or potentially offer a Cared for Child or Care Leaver a Take Over Challenge Opportunity on 29th November 2019. This will enable Committee members to experience the barriers and issues that our children and young people face every day (details are attached at Appendix 2) and the application details can be found at https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/care-and-support-for-children/working-in-partnership/childrens-trust/childrens_rights_month/childrens_rights_month.aspx.
 - My Voice have written and designed the Foster Carer Survey.

- My Voice are currently planning to co-chair the Children's Trust Board on 6th November with a view to challenging members to take action and help recruit new Foster Carers.

TACT update – shortlisted for award

- 6.3. The work that our children and young people completed with 'My Voice' and TACT Fostering and Adoption in developing the 'Language that cares – changing the way professionals talk about children in care' has been shortlisted for the 'children in care' category of the Children and Young People Now Awards. The Awards ceremony will take place on the 28th November 2019 at the Hurlington Club in London.

Engagement activities for CPC

- 6.4. We have produced a list of engagement activities for members of the Corporate Parenting Committee, which is attached at Appendix 1. Members are asked to complete the proforma and return to corporateparenting@cheshireeast.gov.uk asap.

Chromalloy

- 6.5. Chromalloy is a local business based in Crewe who have contacted us wishing to offer support to our Cared for Children and Care Leavers. Examples of activities happening or planned so far include:
- A football match – arrangements are in place for organising the first game with our Care Leavers team
 - New home starter packs – the Care Leaver Manager is liaising with the business regarding a list of items young people require
 - Volunteer mentoring
 - Fostering promotion – our communications team are providing marketing material to enable Chromalloy to promote fostering.
 - Supported Lodging
 - Career Experience Session – being discussed with the Chromalloy management team
 - Maintenance/Skills Offer – being discussed with the Chromalloy management team

Short Break re-tendering

- 6.6. We currently commission 10 different providers to deliver short break services for children with disabilities. These providers form an integral part of the overall local offer for children with disabilities within Cheshire East ensuring that our statutory duty as a local authority is met. The two year initial terms of the contracts (1 September 2017 to

31 August 2019) for the 10 providers have been extended by 1 year and therefore contracts are due to end on 31st August 2020.

- 6.7. Cabinet agreed our plans for recommissioning on the 8th October 2019 and over the coming months we will be working with disabled children and young people, their families and the Parent Carer Forum to co-produce a new specification and will enter into a new procurement exercise.

EU settlement

- 6.8. Due to the uncertainties around Brexit and the need to ensure that our children and young people can achieve permanency and have stability within the country, the service is working hard to identify any children and young people that can be supported to apply for either Citizenship or EU Settled Status. Whilst this process can be supported up to October 2020 we want to ensure that the process has been started for as many of our children and young people as possible. There are difficulties that can slow the process or add additional complexities, such as, engagement with birth families to obtain and consent to documentation, and additional factors of criminal records. Tracking of progress is occurring within supervision, the Permanency Forum and Resource and Accommodation Panel to ensure that our young people have the ability to remain in the security of a home and have financial and economic stability in their preparation for adulthood.

7. Pledge 2 - Education, Employment and Employment Outcomes

Virtual Headteacher's Annual Report

- 7.1. This report is being presented to Committee at the November meeting.

Virtual School – shortlisted for award

- 7.2. The Virtual School has been shortlisted for a 'Children and Young People Now Award 2019'. This is a National award and we are shortlisted as a finalist in the 'Children in Care Award'.

Autumn NEET programme

- 7.3. This is a 12 week programme for young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), and they are offered 2 days per week. There will be opportunities to visit local employers to see the type of work available locally, opportunities available for training, and they will be asked if they would like to take part in a community project and/or have some work experience in an area of their choice. They will also be involved in activities that will enable

them to learn the importance of team work, working on their own initiative and good communication skills. There are 12 spaces available and each young person will be offered an interview before being accepted onto the programme.

- 7.4. By the end of the programme the young people will have:
- Identified their strengths and skills and be able to recognise how these have been identified/improved throughout the programme.
 - Gained a Basic First Aid qualification
 - Gained an ASDAN qualification
 - Learned of different work opportunities available locally
 - Learned of training courses available locally
 - An up to date CV and the opportunity to search and apply for local apprenticeships/jobs.
 - Discussed and planned next steps on completion of the course

8. Pledge 3 - Achieving Permanence and Keeping Children Safe Being a Good Corporate Parent

Care Hubs (Bespoke) Project update

- 8.1. The Bespoke Project Board met on the 19th September 2019. The governance structure for the programme has been agreed, which will include specific workstream concerns Mobilisation of the Children's homes which will be chaired by the Head of Commissioning, The Practice Model, chaired the Head of Cared for Children and Care Leavers and Impact, chaired by the Head of Service for Child in Need and Child Protection.
- 8.2. Meetings have continued to take place with the children's homes providers, Safe Places and Horizon. Unfortunately we have continued to experience delay with Ofsted concerning the registration of the homes which will invariably lead to a delay in the 1st home opening. We now anticipate that this will not happen until December at the earliest. We have taken the opportunity to contact our designated link in Ofsted to ask if there is any way that this process could be expediated.

Fostering and Mockingbird updates

- 8.3. Interviews for the Fostering Service Manager role have been taken place and we are pleased to say that we have appointed to the the post, subject to references and a suitable DBS check. The successful applicant is a highly experienced fostering manager and we would anticipate that they would be in post within the next 3 months. During

the interim period we have recruited an experienced fostering service manager who will oversee the ongoing service developments and our fostering review.

- 8.4. We are delighted to report that we have been successful in the bid that we made to the the Innovation Programme Team at the Department for Education to develop Mockingbird within Cheshire East. We have partnered with the Fostering Network, who are the national support providers for the programme and our first conference with them took place on 22nd October 2019. Over the coming weeks and months we will be developing our governance structure, implementation plan and communication strategy all leading to the development of our first Mockingbird constellation.
- 8.5. The Mockingbird programme delivers the Mockingbird Family Model. This centres on a constellation where one foster home acts as a hub, offering planned and emergency sleepovers and short breaks, advice, training and support, to six to 10 satellite households.



The Fostering Network's Mockingbird programme

- 8.6. Relationships are central to the programme and the hub home builds strong relationships with all those in the constellation, empowering families to support each other and overcome problems before they escalate or lead to placement breakdown and increasing protective factors around children. The constellation also builds links with other families important to the children's care plans and to resources in the

wider community which can provide them with enhanced opportunities to learn, develop and succeed.

Next steps for the Workstream

8.7. A detailed report on this area was presented to the Committee in September. The workstream is continuing to focus on the following areas:

- Training, support and direct work tools are 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 the need for support and request for meetings has not been 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 a holistic picture of emotional health.
- Targeted mentoring to be provided from Voice for Children for up to five 16 and 17 year olds that do not yet have the experience and skills to manage semi-supported living without additional support, and are experiencing 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.

9. Pledge 4 – Health and Wellbeing

Psychological Wellbeing Worker

9.1. As a result of a successful charitable funding bid, we now have a psychological wellbeing worker employed by Pure Insight (an

organisation formed in January 2013 as a direct response to the needs of local care leavers). The funding for this service has been agreed for 2 years.

Health passports

- 9.2. Completion rate of health passport documents is improving consistently, however there has been no recent involvement of children and young people in the development of this document. We are therefore setting up a Review and Redesign working group with young people.

Health Training for Foster Carers

- 9.3. Following the successful health training for foster carers which took place over the summer, additional events have been held during September and October

10. Pledge 5 – Preparing for Adulthood

Care Leaver Survey

- 10.1. In August 2019 the Local Authority received the findings from the bi-annual Care Leaver Survey. The Survey aims to gather the thoughts, wishes and feelings of our Care Leavers so we can develop services that would best meet their needs. The survey was split into parts which reflected the five strands of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- 10.2. More detail on the findings of the survey, and our proposed response, will be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

16+ Accommodation Tender

- 10.3. Cheshire East are currently going through a process of recommissioning our housing related support for 16 years plus. Supported Accommodation is an essential service for our Care Leavers and Cared for Children in providing effective pathways to independence and preparation to be tenancy ready. Recommissioning is providing us with an opportunity to consider our current provisions and support, areas that are working well, and new opportunities to strengthen our offer. The formal procurement period is between 21st October and 21st November 2019, with an aim to award the contract by 20th December with a mobilisation period of January to March 2020.

11. National or legislative changes

Liberty Protection Standards

- 11.1. The Mental Capacity (amendment) Act 2019 received Royal assent in May of this year, although it is not anticipated that this will become statute before October 2020. In preparation for this we have established a Liberty Protection Standards Steering Group which last met in September. The Steering Group follows the work being completed at a national level and looks at how this will be imbedded across Cheshire East. Our group is led by Adult Services, with representation from Children Social Care, Public Health, Commissioners and wider Health Colleagues.
- 11.2. The group has been working on the development of an Impact Assessment for LPS, developing a code of practice, developing a workforce strategy and a communication strategy

Transition for young people with Autism

- 11.3. We recently completed a piece of research with colleagues from Adult Services, the Chief Social Worker for England (Isabelle Trowler) and three other Local Authorities across the country. The research concerned an exploratory study of social work practice with autistic children and young people transitioning to adult services. All of the cohort that we studied in Cheshire East were cared for young people with a diagnosis of Autism.
- 11.4. The study is about to be published with recommendations for an update to several pieces of statutory guidance, the development of new commissioning guidance for Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups, as well as a call for additional innovation funding being made available by the government. We are waiting in anticipation to learn the Department of Health's response to this work

Updated Guidance

- 11.5. CoramBAAF, the Adoption and Fostering Academy have just published updated guidance on regulations, process and good practice in fostering panels in England. This is being used within our foster panel development session, which is taking place on the 4th November and within the development discussions which are in place with our Foster Panel Chair.

12. Implications of the Recommendations

12.1. Legal Implications

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

12.2. Financial Implication

12.2.1. There are no direct financial implications of this report.

12.3. Equality Implications

12.3.1. There are no equality implications as a result of this paper.

12.4. Human Resources Implications

12.4.1. There are no direct human resource implications of this report.

12.5. Risk Management Implications

12.5.1. Cared for children and care leavers are a vulnerable group that are at risk of a number of factors – poor education and training, health, safeguarding and transition into adulthood.

12.6. Rural Communities Implications

12.6.1. There are no direct rural communities' implications of this report.

12.7. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

12.7.1. The contents of this report have implications for cared for children and care leavers, who are some of Cheshire East's most vulnerable children.

12.8. Public Health Implications

12.8.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

12.9. Climate Change Implications

12.9.1. The development of Bespoke and Mockingbird will result in children and young people being placed within Cheshire East. This will therefore result in both Cheshire East officers and members of the wider support network having to travel fewer miles than if these same children were placed in provisions outside of Cheshire East. The majority of this travel is undertaken in cars, therefore there will be reduction in reliance on fossil fuels and a reduced carbon footprint.

13. Ward Members Affected

13.1. Although the number of Cheshire East cared for children and young people is relatively small, they are a vulnerable cohort, who live across Cheshire East and in other local authority areas.

14. Consultation & Engagement

14.1. None.

15. Access to Information

15.1. None.

16. Contact Information

Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

Name: Keith Martin
Job Title: Head of Cared for Children & Care Leavers
Email: Keith.Martin@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Elected Member Options for Engagement around Corporate Parenting

Member Name:

Activity Area	Frequency	Detail	Preference (please rate 1-3 where 1 is preference)
Workstream 1 - Being a Good Corporate Parent	Every 3 months	This workstream covers participation with children and young people, elected member and workforce development, developing the corporate parenting role, quality assurance and evaluation of the impact of the corporate parenting strategy	
Workstream 2 - Education and employment outcomes	Bi-monthly	The purpose of the RAIC/SPEED group is to plan, implement and monitor co-ordinated actions to support the engagement, achievement and progression of cared for children and young people from age 5 -age 16+ and care leavers.	
Workstream 3 - Achieve permanence and keep children safe	Bi-monthly	This work stream covers developing direct tools, resources and practice guidance around permanence, stability and managing risk, embedding and challenging understandings of impact on placements and how to minimise disruption.	
Workstream 4 - Improve health and wellbeing outcomes	Bi-monthly	This workstream aims to ensure that all cared for children and care leavers have equitable access to health services to enable them to achieve their optimum health potential and have the same opportunities as children who are not cared for. The group monitors progress of the actions identified to meet the health needs of cared for children and care leavers, and identifies new opportunities to improve services available. Opportunities for members of the Corporate Parenting Committee to gain a deeper understanding of the health needs of cared for children and care leavers, and the processes involved in meeting those needs could be achieved by visiting the Specialist Cared for Children Nursing Team, based at Cledford House in Middlewich. Discussions with various team members could provide a comprehensive overview of the work of the team.	

Workstream 5 - Prepare young people for adulthood	Bi-monthly	This is a bi monthly group where the actions of the corporate parenting strategy are discussed and we also look at how we can improve the preparation for adulthood for our Cared for Children and Care Leavers. The group consists of the Care Leavers Service, Fostering, The Children's Society, the Participation team and occasionally local accommodation providers. We look at new initiatives, how we can move the service forward and then feed back into the corporate parenting operational group.	
Frontline visits to Cared for Children and Care Leavers Service	Quarterly	This includes opportunities to engage with the service, team meetings and (with consent of the young people) the shadow committee and support statutory visits, attend group activities such as the autumn programme supporting care leavers around young people who are NEET and confidence and self esteem training, the monthly care leavers activities.	
Visits to Cheshire East residential homes	Every 2 months	Opportunity to engage with young people in the places they live, support quality assurance role and also challenge and feedback to committee on challenges for young people in residential settings, local and community issues.	
Ignition Panel	Monthly	A monthly panel that meets to educate young people on their accommodation options. The panel empowers young people by giving them a choice to make their own decisions with the support of their Social Worker. The panel is held at the YMCA in Crewe, it lasts two hours. Next panels are: 13th Nov (1pm), 11th Dec (1pm) and will be the second Wednesday of each month in 2020.	
Star Awards Planning and Celebration Day	Monthly planning meetings and annual event	The theme for this year's event, which takes place on Sunday 24th November at Tatton Park, is pirates and princesses, and many staff will be dressing up to add to the ambiance. Activities on the day include, face painting, arts and crafts, slime making, willow weaving, hair braiding, soft play, sports activities, treasure hunt, African drumming, photo booth and lots more. The aim of the day is to celebrate the success and achievements of all our cared for children over the past 12 months. It's a really good opportunity for our young people to see their social workers, managers and elected members celebrating with them outside of the day to day role.	

Foster Panel	Usually every 3 weeks on a Monday	The Foster Panel makes recommendations for approval, changes to approval and deregistration of foster carers. It also makes recommendations relating to placement and long term matching of cared for children and young people. It is expected that members have prepared well by reading the papers that are provided one week prior to Panel. This may take several hours as there are usually large numbers of papers to read. It is easier to take notes while reading so that main issues can be identified at panel quickly. Panel members are expected to contribute to the discussion both prior and post attendance of applicants / foster carers presenting at Panel. These discussions include identification of strength and vulnerabilities of carers drawn from the paperwork, gaps in assessment and compliance with checklist, for example medicals and DBS checks. Panel members are expected to agree questions to ask Carers and who is asking which question. This provides a structure for the carers' attendance. Panel members are expected to contribute to the discussion on recommendations to be made to the Agency Decision Maker. All Panel members are appraised annually by the Chair and the service adviser. In addition it is expected that Panel members attend the annual development session withheld fostering service.	
Participation with children and young people	Ongoing	As well as My Voice being a powerful voice for cared for children and care leavers, there are also wider opportunities for young people who do not attend My Voice to have their voices heard and shape services in Cheshire East. This includes commissioning; being on interview panels, service design, helping to write strategies etc. This is done in a variety of methods including group discussions, meetings, events etc.	
My Voice (Shadow Committee link)	Bi-monthly	Cheshire East's Children in Care Council meet with the chair of Corporate Parenting Committee and Head of Service to discuss the theme of the following Corporate Parenting Committee. All themes include the 5 main pledges of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.	
UASC / Asylum Seeker Social Group	Fortnightly	Fortnightly starting on 7th November at the YMCA in Crewe. This is a drop in group whereby our UASC can meet, have some food and play some games.	
Tenancy Readiness Course	4-weekly	Tenancy Readiness Course - 4 weekly courses held x3 times per year. Twice in Crewe and once in Macclesfield. The course aims to help improve and develop young peoples independence skills so that they are better equipped to manage when they leave care.	

Care Leaver activities	Date tbc	Opportunity to attend the annual Christmas meal.	
Governing Body for Virtual School	Once per term (3 per year)	The aim of the Governing Board of the Virtual School is to promote high aspirations for the educational progress, attainment, achievement and attendance of Cheshire East Cared for Children; working with key partners to close the attainment gap between Cared for Children and their peers and to ensure that their voice is heard and their full potential is reached.	
Tuition support	Ad hoc	To offer revision support and guidance to children through online/verbal feedback.	
NW Designated Teacher Leads (Virtual Leads)	Next in March 2020	North West Designated conference for lead teachers and schools, hosted by Northwest Virtual Heads. Key speakers from Ofsted, DfE, NAVSH. Tuesday 10th March - Manchester Cricket Club	
Independent Visitor group meetings	Every 3 months	Opportunity to visit our Independent Visitor group meetings, meet volunteers and find out from them how they are supporting children and young people, and also to offer any support in the recruitment of Independent Visitors. The next Volunteer meeting is on Wednesday 30th October at 6:15pm at Winsford Academy.	

Please complete this form and return to corporateparenting@cheshireeast.gov.uk

NEW MENU LAUNCHING ON 1ST NOVEMBER 2019

-MAIN MENU-

GOING THE DISTANCE FOR NOVEMBER CHILDREN'S RIGHTS MONTH

-STARTERS-

This November you can support Children's Rights Month in Cheshire East by selecting one or more of the challenges below. The challenges have been designed to give you an insight into the issues that children and young people face everyday in our borough. This year we are doing it differently as each challenge has been matched to an outcome area in the new Children and Young People's Plan 2019-21.

-MAIN COURSES-

GOING THE DISTANCE DAY 19TH NOVEMBER 2019—

Hampers will be placed across the following sites where you can donate food and toiletries to our children and families that are most at risk:

- Macclesfield Family Centre, Macclesfield Town Hall, SK10 1EA
- Westfields, Middlewich Road, CW11 1HZ
- Crewe Youth Support Hub, 23-25 Market Street, Crewe, CW1 2EW

AFTER MAKING YOUR DONATION YOU WILL THEN MAKE A PLEDGE OF HOW YOU WILL "GO THE DISTANCE" FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGHOUT 2020.

TAKE OVER CHALLENGE— If you have an opportunity for a young person to work within your team on Friday 29th November then please select this course.

THE CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE WE CARE FOR, "LIFE WITH NO INSTRUCTIONS"— These challenges give us an idea of the challenges that Care Leavers face when moving into their own home after leaving care. You can choose from the following:

- Team bake off, no instructions
- Make flat pack furniture, no instructions

-SIDE DISHES-

THE CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE WE CARE FOR, "£21 CHALLENGE"— After paying household bills, Care Leavers are only left with £21 for food, travel, phone and social activities. Let's see if you can do the same.

FEEL & BE SAFE, "A HELPING HAND"— As a team or individually collect food and toiletries for our children, young people and families that are most at risk of homelessness.

HAPPINESS & MENTAL HEALTH, "SPONSORED SILENCE"— You can raise money for any charity whilst experiencing the isolation and loneliness that children and young people with mental ill health.

BEING HEALTHY & MAKING POSITIVE CHOICES, "MAKE A HEALTHY MEAL ON A BUDGET AND SHARE YOUR RECIPE"— With a £2 budget you will make a healthy meal and share your recipe; this will go into a recipe book for our young people.

BEST SKILLS & QUALIFICATIONS, "TAKE A GCSE EXAM"— Gain first hand experience of the stresses and difficulties that our young people face in school.

-DESSERTS-

BEST SKILLS & QUALIFICATIONS, "THEORY AND HAZARD PERCEPTION TEST"— Passing your driving test is much more difficult than back in the day, try out the test to see if you'd pass.

ADDITIONAL NEEDS, ADDITIONAL CHANCES, "EHCP EXPERIENCE"— Find out how it feels for our children and young people to be assessed and reviewed for an Education, Health and Care Plan.

A BIG THANK YOU TO CHESHIRE EAST YOUTH COUNCIL FOR DESIGNING OUR MENU THIS YEAR

