

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Committee**  
held on Tuesday, 14th July, 2020 as a Virtual Meeting

## **PRESENT**

Councillor K Flavell (Chairman)  
Councillor J Saunders (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors R Bailey, M Beanland, J Buckley, C Bulman, P Butterill, S Edgar,  
S Holland and M Warren

## **Apologies**

Councillors J Barber

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor James Barber.

### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED- That the minutes of the meeting held on the 21 January 2020 be approved as a correct and accurate record.

### **4 CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE REPORT**

Kerry Birtles, Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers, provided a summary and overview of the Corporate Parenting Update Report to the Committee.

The Committee heard how a virtual meeting of the Shadow Committee had been held with two cared for children recording from their own homes. The meeting was seen as an achievement particularly as the children had felt safe at home with carers in a way that hadn't been anticipated and the advantages of working this way had advantages that meant more virtual meetings would be held in the future.

The Committee heard the following key points::

- Every child having open to the service had been risk assessed where virtual contact was being maintained;
- 80-85% of young people were being seen in a face-to-face capacity unless there was a Covid-19 risk, solutions had included socially distanced walks in the park;
- Foster Carers had reported a reduction in the number of children that needed to move to another placement in an unplanned way. The day-to-

day pressures of school life being removed and the extra family time could have contributed to this; and

- Care Leavers had reported loneliness, social isolation and there were concerns that related to employment opportunities, this cohort of young people were not as well connected to their care families as other members of society were and were a current area of concern for the service.

The Committee were given the opportunity to ask questions and there was further discussion that established:

- The number of cared for children had risen from 530-547. This was due to the difficulties in the progression of children's plans for permanence during this period. Children could not be transitioned because of the lockdown restrictions;
- There had been significant delays for Children involved with care proceedings. It had been difficult to conduct complex cases in a virtual space and Courts had looked at hybrid solutions. There was an estimated delay of 6 months for children progressing through systems;
- There was a risk to children becoming cared for in an unplanned way as an emergency. Officers were expecting further incidents of hidden harm as a fallout from lockdown, this included an increase in drug/alcohol, mental health breakdown; and
- There had been a reduction in placement instability.

The Committee recognised the importance of the right response post-Covid-19, this should include appropriate accommodation, education, jobs and inclusive growth. Members had relationships with businesses across the borough that officers did not and from that perspective, the Committee could help advocate for care leavers in their role as corporate parents.

RESOLVED-

That officers be thanked for their continued good working practice during these unprecedented time and that the report be received and noted.

## **5 CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ANNUAL REPORT**

Sue Preston, Service Manager at The Children's Society attended the meeting to present the Children's Rights Annual Report to the Committee.

The Committee heard that The Children's Society is now in it's seventh year of delivery and continues to have a good working relationship with Cheshire East Council.

Key headlines from the report included:

- From 2019, Ofsted recognised any young person classed as being in a private fostering arrangement receive advocacy support through the Children's Society;
- Advocacy referrals had increased this year and there had been more asylum seeking children;

- The Children's Commissioner completed a report in 2019 that concluded advocacy was strong, and a deeper dive was also reviewed on short-based advocacy which concluded as a positive piece of work;
- The Children's Society had a new Chief Executive Officer, Mark Russell; and
- Looking ahead, the next phase will be returning to work in a safe way.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and noted.

**6 REVIEW OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Lauren Conway, Improvement and Development Officer attended the meeting to address the Committee about the review of working that related to the Terms of Reference for this Committee.

The Committee were asked to endorse the change from:

"The Committee includes representative young people from the Children in Care Council to advise the Committee."

To:

"The Committee is informed by representative young people from the Children in Care Council to advise the Committee."

RESOLVED:

That the proposed changes be made to the Terms of Reference wording for this Committee.

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and concluded at 5.14 pm

Councillor K Flavell (Chairman)