

# Corporate Parenting Committee

## Agenda

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**Date:** Tuesday, 15th March, 2022  
**Time:** 4.00 pm  
**Venue:** Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road,  
Sandbach CW11 1HZ

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**PLEASE NOTE** –This meeting is open to the public and anyone attending this meeting will need to wear a face covering upon entering and leaving the venue. It is advised that this only be removed when speaking at the meeting.

**The importance of undertaking a lateral flow test in advance of attending any committee meeting.** Anyone attending is asked to undertake a lateral flow test on the day of any meeting before embarking upon the journey to the venue. Please note that it can take up to 30 minutes for the true result to show on a lateral flow test. If your test shows a positive result, then you must not attend the meeting, and must follow the advice which can be found here:

[https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council\\_and\\_democracy/council\\_information/coronavirus/testing-for-covid-19.aspx](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/coronavirus/testing-for-covid-19.aspx)

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

It should be noted that Part 1 items of Cheshire East Council decision making meetings are audio recorded and the recordings will be uploaded to the Council's website.

### **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.

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For requests for further information

**Contact:** Josie Lloyd

**Tel:** 01270 686 466

**E-Mail:** [josie.lloyd@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:josie.lloyd@cheshireeast.gov.uk) with any apologies

3. **Minutes of Previous meeting** (Pages 3 - 6)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2022.

4. **Update from the Shadow Committee (Verbal)**

To receive a verbal update on the Corporate Parenting Shadow Committee.

5. **Corporate Parenting Scorecard Quarter 3** (Pages 7 - 14)

To consider the Corporate Parenting scorecard for quarter 3.

6. **Mainstream Fostering Recruitment and Foster Care Fortnight Update Report**  
(Pages 15 - 20)

To consider a report on mainstream fostering recruitment and Foster Care Fortnight.

7. **Corporate Parenting Committee Forward Plan** (Pages 21 - 30)

To approve the proposed forward plan of reports for the Corporate Parenting Committee for 2022-23.

**Membership:** Councillors M Asquith, R Bailey, J Barber, J Buckley (Associate Non Voting Member), C Bulman, P Butterill, K Flavell (Chair), G Hayes, S Handley, S Holland, D Jefferay, D Marren and J Saunders (Vice-Chair)

**CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Committee**  
held on Thursday, 27th January, 2022 in the Council Chamber, Municipal  
Buildings, Earle Street, Crewe CW1 2BJ

**PRESENT**

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

Councillors M Asquith, R Bailey, J Buckley, C Bulman, S Handley, S Holland,  
D Jefferay and D Marren

**ALSO PRESENT**

Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services  
Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care  
Annemarie Parker, Head of Service: Cared for Children and Care Leavers  
Laura Rogerson, Head of Service: Inclusion (joined virtually via Microsoft  
Teams)  
Gill Betton, Head of Service: Children's Developments & Partnerships (joined  
virtually via Microsoft Teams)  
Nabeel Chaudhry, Head of Service: Safeguarding (joined virtually via  
Microsoft Teams)  
Nick Crick, Interim Head of Service: Fostering (joined virtually via Microsoft  
Teams)  
Shan McParland, Designated Nurse Looked After Children (joined virtually via  
Microsoft Teams)  
Josie Lloyd, Democratic Services Officer

**21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Barber, Councillor  
Butterill and Councillor Hayes.

**22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING****RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2021 be agreed as a  
correct record, subject to an amendment to the resolution for the  
Corporate Parenting Progress Report to state that Annemarie Parker  
would take away a request to look into making vaccination a prerequisite  
of employment, rather than a requirement.

## 24 CORPORATE PARENTING PROGRESS REPORT

The committee received the report which advised how the service is delivering the priorities for cared for children and care leavers as set out in the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

A query was raised as to the average length of a court delay. It was noted that this varies but that Annemarie Parker, Head of Cared for Children and Care Leavers, would provide the committee with data on this.

A concern was raised regarding the employer event of 18 November 2021, attended by the Virtual School and Care Leavers Service, where Cheshire East employer attendance was lower than that of neighbouring authorities. It was agreed that the service area would look further into promoting events such as this. A follow up event was due to take place in December 2022.

The committee noted the positive figure of 18 young people currently at university and a request was made for comparative data on the national average to be provided.

A further request was made that future reports to committee include comparative data with other local authorities or within Cheshire East over time to provide context to the figures included within reports.

A concern was raised regarding young people who had taken out contracts for technology, such as mobile phones, during the temporary Universal Credit uplift. The committee were advised that there is work undertaken with young people around independence, part of which includes budgeting and financial commitments around contracts. For those young people who may be struggling financially as a result of contracts, it was agreed that the Director of Children's Social Care would look into whether further support was required.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

## 25 HEALTH OF CARED FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ANNUAL REPORT, 2020-2021

The committee received the report which outlined the delivery of health services to children in the care of Cheshire East Council during the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

A query was raised regarding table 2 in the report which showed a comparison of initial health assessments completed within 20 days across each quarter. It was requested that future reports also include information

on the assessments which were completed beyond this target and how long they took to complete.

A further query was raised about receiving up to date figures on children in care in the borough. It was noted that the timing of the Children and Families scorecard did not always align with the dates of the Corporate Parenting meetings and it was agreed that consideration would be given by the service area to how current data could be brought to each Corporate Parenting Committee meeting as a standing item.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

**26 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS ANNUAL REPORT, 2020-2021**

The committee received the report which provided an overview of the activity of the team of Independent Reviewing Officers who reviewed the care plans of cared for children in the last business year from April 2020 to March 2021.

A concern was raised regarding the number of recorded consultation forms which appeared to be low. The committee were advised that, although the number of response forms received was low, additional feedback was received through the reviews directly. The team were also looking at other means of obtaining this feedback, including meeting with providers for a mobile phone app. It was requested that the next report includes reference to all feedback received rather than just the returned forms.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

**27 CHESHIRE EAST FOSTERING PANEL AND FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORTS**

The committee received the reports which evidenced the impact of services and foster carers on outcomes for children.

The committee discussed the issue of recruitment and retention of foster carers which the service area was actively working on. A suggestion was raised for potential foster carers to be invited to events with the mockingbird constellation to meet existing foster carers in an informal environment.

The committee thanked the Fostering Panel for their work.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

**28 CHANGES TO TIME OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE AND REVIEW OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The committee received the report which proposed that, from the new municipal year, the committee start time would be within business hours. The committee requested that the start times alternate between 10am and 2pm.

**RESOLVED:**

That the committee:

1. Approve that the Corporate Parenting Committee is held within usual business hours from April 2022 onwards.
2. Review and endorse the terms of reference.

The meeting commenced at 16.00 and concluded at 17.50

Councillor K Flavell (Chair)



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## **BRIEFING REPORT**

### **Corporate Parenting Committee**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	15 March 2022
<b>Report Title:</b>	Corporate Parenting Performance Report – Quarter 3 (2021-22)
<b>Report of:</b>	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services

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#### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1.** This report sets out the performance for corporate parenting for quarter 3 of 2021-22 (1 October – 31 December 2021). The Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to note the performance for quarter 3 and to provide support and challenge in relation to performance for children and young people.

#### **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1.** This report sets out the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on performance, and the arrangements that have been in place during this time and gives an overview of performance across the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Service for quarter 3 of 2021-22.
- 2.2.** The directorate has taken on board the feedback from committee with regards to adding in comparator and trend data where available. The scorecard is being reviewed and will be presented in Q4 addressing these comments.

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1.** Some ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic still remain. Delivery of frontline services, especially in terms of face to face visiting and routine reviews, have been adapted to reflect the various isolation requirements to protect both workers and the families we work with.
- 3.2.** Senior leaders and managers continue to remain sighted on service performance and impact on children and young people through weekly

scrutiny of our performance data and performance meetings within the service.

#### **4. Briefing Information**

- 4.1.** Cheshire East Council were responsible for 528 cared for children at the end of quarter 3. The cared for children population changes on a daily basis as children enter and leave care. Children cease to be cared for due to a number of reasons, these include turning 18, returning to their birth family, adoption and special guardianship. The latest comparable data we have across the region is for quarter 2, where Cheshire East's rate was the lowest across the North West at around 66.5 per 10,000 (0-17 years) compared to an average of 96.5, and is in line with the latest available national average which is 67 per 10,000.
- 4.2.** There has been a positive reduction in the number of children entering care from 179 in 2020 to 130 in 2021. However, this has not resulted in a significant reduction in the overall number of cared for children (534 at the end of March 2020 compared to 518 in 2021). There are a variety of reasons for this, which include delays within the court arena. However, we are constantly monitoring this and looking at ways to ensure that we are reviewing plans for children to achieve permanence at the earliest opportunity. Positively, the number of children where care orders have been discharged is increasing; so far this year (February 2022) we have discharged care orders for 16 children and there are a number of applications currently before the court so we are hopeful that this number will increase. Overall last year, we achieved seven discharges of care orders which represents a positive picture.
- 4.3.** There are a wide range of approaches being utilised with families on the edge of care to provide networks of support and to enable children and young people to stay living within their families and communities. This focused intervention and support can lead to lasting positive change for families.
- 4.4.** The timeliness of cared for children's reviews continues to be good and in Q3, this was at 97%. Additionally, 97% of children were involved in their reviews. It is really important that children and young people are involved in their plan, and we are always looking at how we can develop and improve their participation.
- 4.5.** We have recently celebrated National Apprenticeship Week and have used a variety of methods to increase apprenticeship awareness for our care leavers across the council. An [interview with our Apprenticeship Coordinator](#), Duncan Allen is available on Centranet. Duncan speaks passionately about his work and the importance of apprenticeships and work experience for our children and young people.

- 4.6.** Q3 data shows an increase in children placed with in-house foster carers (121 in Q3 compared to 109 in Q2). This is really positive and there are plans in place to increase recruitment of foster carers, which will mean that we can place more of our children with Cheshire East foster carers. Generally, we want children to remain local and within Cheshire East where possible. For some children, they may live out of the area because they need a specialist placement, or they want to be close to birth family who have moved away. Arrangements for any child who lives at a distance are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure this remains appropriate.
- 4.7.** We continue to work hard to reduce the number of children in residential care. Although the number has risen to 31 from 30 this quarter, we remain committed to ensuring that children have the opportunity of living within a family wherever possible. We hold monthly step-down meetings to review children's plans where there is a possibility of them moving to foster care or to return to family members. Overall, the progress in this area is encouraging and we have seven fewer children in residential care than during the same period last year. Currently we have 6% of our cared for children living in residential care, the national average is 10%.
- 4.8.** The number of adoptions continues to slowly increase with 11 children adopted so far this year and another 14 living in their adoption placements. Of the 11 children legally adopted so far this, unfortunately regarding the number of days from entering care to moving into placement with an adoptive family (A10), 7 out of the 11 were over 500 days, one was 1,207 days, which will have impacted our average number of days for the 11 adoptions to date. Locally and nationally the timescales for placing children within their adoptive families is monitored to avoid unnecessary delay for children. Pre-pandemic Cheshire East were in a strong position in relation to timeliness, above the regional and national average. However this has been significantly impacted because of the complexities involved in facilitating transitions and the impact of Covid-19. For those children where delay was experienced, their individual circumstances are well understood and we continue to scrutinise planning to ensure that children do not experience unnecessary delay.
- 4.9.** The number of 16 to 18-year-old young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is low. We have a dedicated 16 plus advisor within the virtual school, and this reflects the proactive work to keep our young people in education or support them into employment and training.
- 4.10.** The NEET data for our 19 to 21-year-old young people shows that 46% of this cohort are not engaged in education, employment or training. The national average for 2020/21 was 41%. We are looking closely at this data and the circumstances for these young adults which include pregnancy, parenting or illness, but are not exclusive to this.

- 4.11.** The next NEET programme is currently being planned and will run for 12 weeks during the spring term. This is a good way of engaging our young people and it is successful as a pathway to get young people involved in a range of activities and into education, employment or training. Previous NEET programmes have seen real successes for our young people.
- 4.12.** Despite the vast majority of health assessments being requested within 48 hours of children entering care (90% in Q2), there are some delays in these children being seen by a paediatrician. Q2 data indicated that 62% of these children had their initial health assessment within timescales, Q3 data is not yet available at the time of writing this report. As at Q3, 76% of our cared for children had an up-to-date annual health assessment. This data will be discussed with health colleagues to see what is causing delay so we can truly understand the full picture and manage this to ensure that the timeliness of health assessments for children improves.
- 4.13.** Q3 data shows that 97% of our care leavers are in appropriate accommodation. This is not 100% because we have a small number of young people who are in prison, and this is never recorded as being appropriate. This is currently less than five and as such the number is suppressed in line with DfE guidelines. Nationally the latest available data reported 95% of care leavers in suitable accommodation with 3% being in custody; the other main reasons for accommodation being classed as unsuitable is emergency accommodation or homelessness.
- 4.14.** An increasing number of care leavers now have up-to-date pathway plans (96% in Q3 compared to 90% in Q2). Hopefully, as further isolations and restrictions ease, we will be able to meet with individuals where reviews have been delayed.

## **5. Implications**

### **5.1. Legal**

- 5.1.1. There are no direct legal implications of this report.

### **5.2. Finance**

- 5.2.1. Although there are no direct financial implications or changes to the MTFs as a result of this briefing paper, performance measures may be used as an indicator of where more or less funding is needed at a service level.

### **5.3. Human Resources**

- 5.3.1. There are no direct human resource implications.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Annemarie Parker, Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers <a href="mailto:Annemarie.Parker@cheshireeast.gov.uk">Annemarie.Parker@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a>
Appendices:	Corporate Parenting Scorecard 2021-22 Q3
Background Papers:	None

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## Corporate Parenting Scorecard

Ref		Polarity	Stat Neigh Av	National Av	Target	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Q1 21-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22
<b>General</b>										
G1	Number of cared for children		626		400-475	539	518	527	519	528
G2	Rate per 10,000 cared for children		60	67		70	67	67	67	68
G3	Number of care leavers (aged 16-21)							257	253	243
<b>Priority 1 - Being a Good Corporate Parent</b>										
P1.1	% cared for children reviews in timescales	High is Good			97%	99%	99%	96%	99%	97%
P1.2	% of children and young people involved in their reviews	High is Good				99%	97%	96%	99%	97%
<b>Priority 2 - Improved Education, Employment and Training</b>										
P2.1	Number of children living in educational/ residential provision	Low is Good				6	6	5	3	2
P2.2	Number of 16-18 year olds in care that are NEET (monthly)	Low is Good				7	9	7	2	7
P2.4	Number of 16-18 year old care leavers that are NEET	Low is Good				7	9	11	0	5
P2.5	Number of care leavers accessing higher education (University)	High is Good	14	2040				12	16	16
P2.6	Number of Cheshire East care leavers in apprenticeships (18+)	High is Good					7	7	7	7
P2.7	% 19-21 year care leavers that are NEET (as per national reporting)	Low is Good	42%	41%		45%	51%	47%	48%	46%
<b>Priority 3 - Achieving Permanence and Staying Safe</b>										
P3.1	Number of cared for children in internal foster care	High is Good				116	117	128	109	121
P3.2	Number of children in care living with friends and family					70	79	85	87	82
P3.3	Number of cared for children in external foster care	Low is Good				139	145	144	143	132
P3.4	Number of children and young people in residential care	Low is Good				38	39	36	30	31
P3.5	Number of children placed with parents					63	59	59	56	58
P3.6	Number of cared for children placed over 20 miles from home address (Cheshire East and out of borough)	Low is Good						147	139	126
P3.7	Number of children living out of borough	Low is Good						218	208	206
P3.8	Number of cared for children who have been missing	Low is Good						35	38	39
P3.9	% of cared for children with a plan for permanence endorsed at second review	High is Good				50%	24%	64%	43%	48%
P3.10	Number of children who have achieved permanence in foster care	High is Good				132	129	131	135	131
P3.11	Number of placement moves in the quarter	Low is Good				60	55	75	83 (57 individuals)	113 (92 individuals)
P3.12	Number of children ceased to be looked after due to granting of special guardianship order (SGO) - year to date figure					11	13	7	9	13
P3.13	Number of children with an adoption decision					51	34	30	33	29
P3.14	Number of children ceased to be looked after due to adoption - year to date figure	High is Good				6	26	3	5	11
P3.15	Average number of days between entering care and moving in with adoptive family (A10 national indicator) - yearly figure	Low is Good		376			638	589	597	574
P3.16	Average number of days between placement order and match with adoptive family (A2 national indicator) - yearly figure	Low is Good		185			275	275	251	230

Corporate Parenting Scorecard										
Ref		Polarity	Stat Neigh Av	National Av	Target	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Q1 21-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22
<b>Priority 4 - Improve Health and Wellbeing Outcomes</b>										
P4.1	% of initial health assessments requested within 48 hours of coming into care	High is Good				59%	68%	84%	90%	<i>not yet available</i>
P4.2	% of initial health assessments completed by paediatricians within 20 working days	High is Good				47%	73%	43%	62%	<i>not yet available</i>
P4.3	% of review health assessments completed (year to date figure)	High is Good	89%	88%			82%	76%	80%	76%
P4.4	Number of care leavers with a health passport	High is Good						12/12 100%	14/14 100%	14/14 100%
P4.5	% of young people with a SDQ score of 20 or above	Low is Good					26%	26%	27%	26%
<b>Priority 5 - Preparing for Adulthood</b>										
P5.1	% of care leavers with an up to date pathway plan	High is Good					89%	92%	90%	96%
P5.2	% of care leavers in suitable accommodation	High is Good	89%	88%		96%	97%	97%	98%	97%
P5.3	Number of individuals in staying put arrangement						28	27	24	31



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## **BRIEFING REPORT**

### **Corporate Parenting Committee**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	15 March 2022
<b>Report Title:</b>	Mainstream Fostering Recruitment and Foster Care Fortnight Update Report
<b>Report of:</b>	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services

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#### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1. This report provides an update to committee on recruitment activity undertaken by the mainstream fostering service and plans to support Foster Care Fortnight in May 2022.

#### **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1. The report highlights the plans to proactively recruit more mainstream foster carers, activity which will take place in Foster Care Fortnight, and annual activity to raise awareness of, and recognise and support the valuable contribution of our foster carers.
- 2.2. This reports relates to pledge 3 of the Corporate Parenting Strategy: we will work to achieve permanence and keep children safe. The report highlights some of the work undertaken and progress made.
- 2.3. This report sets out related performance information regarding the recruitment activity, process and number of foster carers recruited in the last year between 1 April 2021 to 31 January 2022, and highlights how the Covid pandemic has impacted on recruitment during this time.

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1. The fostering service is responsible for discharging Cheshire East's statutory responsibilities and duties as a fostering agency. It is essential that that service meets its responsibilities to ensure sufficiency and availability of foster homes for cared for children and young people within Cheshire East.

- 3.2.** The fostering service in Cheshire East recruits, trains and supports mainstream foster carers and connected foster carers so that children and young people can be placed in high quality foster homes close to their family, friends, and school. It is a regulated service and is subject to inspection under the Care Standards Act 2000.
- 3.3.** Prior to October 2020, Cheshire East had been in a collaborative recruitment arrangement with three other local authorities called Foster 4. Following an independent review of the fostering service in January 2020, the decision was taken to leave Foster 4.
- 3.4.** The Covid pandemic delayed the plan to leave Foster 4 until the end of September 2020. On 1 October 2020 Cheshire East commenced recruitment under the 'Together for Fostering' branding which had been developed together with our own foster carers.
- 3.5.** Enquiry numbers did increase significantly following the separation; however, it soon became apparent that this would not be a normal year as the reality and practicalities of the Covid pandemic disrupted the usual rhythms of foster carer recruitment and appears to have impacted negatively on the conversion rate from people making enquiries then going on to make an application to foster.
- 3.6.** This was the case for most local authorities across the UK and for independent fostering agencies (IFAs) as many people felt they were not able to commit to becoming foster carers during the pandemic. Although on a positive note it became evident that many more people had begun to consider fostering as a new career.
- 3.7.** We plan to raise awareness of the valuable work that our foster carers do every day in caring for our most vulnerable children and young people, and increase our marketing and recruitment activity, during Foster Care Fortnight in May 2022.
- 3.8.** Foster Care Fortnight is the UK's biggest foster care awareness raising campaign, led by the fostering charity The Fostering Network. The campaign supports fostering services across the UK to highlight the need for more foster carers. It is supported by celebrities and politicians from across the UK. Thousands of new foster families are needed every year to care for children, with the greatest need being for foster carers for teenagers, sibling groups, disabled children, and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- 3.9.** Foster Care Fortnight will take place this year from 9 to 22 May 2022. The theme this year is 'fostering communities' and the campaign aims to shine a light on the many ways people across the fostering community have supported and continue to support each other - particularly over the last two years during the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### **4. Briefing Information**

- 4.1.** From 1 April 2021 to 31 January 2022 there has continued to be a lot of interest shown in mainstream fostering for the council. The new [fostering website](#) for Cheshire East, developed in conjunction with foster carers, has continued to gain a lot of visitors and to generate interest in fostering for the council. It is easily accessed from a mobile phone.
- 4.2.** The key challenge ahead is to achieve conversion from that initial interest of people enquiring about fostering, to identifying and safely recruiting people who have the necessary space in their home, motivation skills and attributes to become foster carers. That initial interest can take time to grow. Some research indicates this process can take anything from 18 months up to 5 years.
- 4.3.** Ofsted published their annual report - Fostering in England 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 - and it is heartening to note that this period saw more fostering households recorded than ever before (this included both local authority and independent fostering agencies (IFAs)). According to the Ofsted report, 160,635 initial enquiries were made during 2020-21, which was the highest number ever (a 55% increase since 2014-15 – the 2014 to 2015 year represented a high point of foster care activity) however 79% of these enquiries were made with IFAs. It was noted however that the conversion ratio of enquiries to applications was conversely at the lowest level on record at 16 enquiries to 1 application, for 2014-15 there were 8 enquiries to 1 application.
- 4.4.** Since 1 April 2021 to 31 January 2022 there have been 177 initial enquiries received by the fostering service in Cheshire East which have resulted in 30 initial visits. Last year, for the whole year between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, there were 181 initial enquiries and 63 initial visits.
- 4.5.** Since 1 April 2021 to 31 January 2022, 10 new mainstream fostering households were approved which have provided 13-15 homes for children and young people, dependent on the numbers of siblings that can be placed who are able to share a bedroom. Last year, 15 new mainstream households were approved which provided 23 homes for children.
- 4.6.** Cheshire East currently has a total of 160 approved mainstream and short breaks foster carers comprising of 95 households. However this is not sufficient to meet the current demand for foster homes. As of 28 January 2022, 53% (135) children and young people from Cheshire East were placed with independent fostering agency foster carers compared to 47% (121) children and young people placed with in-house mainstream foster carers.
- 4.7.** Our ambition is to shift the balance so that we move towards a more sustainable split of 60% of children and young people being placed with Cheshire East foster carers and 40% being commissioned via independent

fostering agencies. This will require a corresponding increase in marketing and recruitment activity to compete with the IFAs which has been included within our recruitment strategy.

- 4.8.** Recruitment activity within the Covid pandemic has continued to be challenging, however, we have continued to achieve success via the website with a high number of people visiting and spending time reading the information.
- 4.9.** We have continued to work with the Marketing and Communications Team to develop a new brand identity and deliver ongoing campaigns that we are confident will increase the number of applications from people to become a local authority foster carer in Cheshire East.
- 4.10.** The key strategic communications objectives are:
- to improve local foster care placement choice and stability for children and young people in Cheshire East, particularly for teenagers and children requiring short break care
  - to increase the number of in-house foster placements and reduce the use of independent fostering agencies (IFAs) and residential care
  - our target is to recruit at least 20-30 additional foster carers annually
  - we will work more closely with commercial companies, partners, community groups and key stakeholder groups to showcase the value foster carers provide to our community
  - we hope that the council and other large organisations will commit to becoming a fostering friendly employer in 2022/23 to further encourage and promote more people to become foster carers.
- 4.11.** We have strategically placed banners at a range of schools across Cheshire East to raise awareness and attract parents, carers, and school staff to foster. In addition, we have supported the Marketing and Communications Team to increase social media activity and to initiate the successful winter recruitment campaign based on the 'Wish for you the world' campaign and video, which has generated a lot of interest in fostering for Cheshire East.
- 4.12.** At the time of writing, there is no obvious sign that the usual patterns of enquiries and recruitment will re-emerge imminently however we have plans to step up our activity over the forthcoming months as Covid restrictions are lifted. As people's personal situations change, we hope to see some of the people who made enquiries in 2020-2021 start to return to seriously considering a career in fostering.
- 4.13.** We continue to be proactive in recruiting suitable carers and ensure that anyone who does make an enquiry receives a comprehensive information

booklet and has a conversation with a knowledgeable staff member who can answer any questions and arrange for an initial visit to take place.

- 4.14.** We have also offered monthly virtual drop-in sessions for those interested in fostering but who want to know more before they submit an enquiry. We will continue to provide these sessions with additional face to face sessions being planned from March 2022.
- 4.15.** In July and August 2021 we attended the Cheshire Show and Geronimo Festival to raise awareness of fostering and generate interest, covering four full days in total. These events were 'staffed' by a mix of fostering service staff, foster carers and some representation from the wider children's service (19 staff and 3 foster carers in total). Details were taken from 23 people/ households across these four days, however, on further follow up there was a mixed response, and to date those enquiries resulted in progression to just one initial visit.
- 4.16.** Additional activity took place within the Virtual Pride event whereby a fostering couple from the LGBTQA+ community talked about fostering for the council. Five children's services staff also ran the Congleton half marathon while promoting the fostering service with a photo opportunity prior to the race while wearing our promotional T-shirts.
- 4.17.** Staff and foster carers have also taken fostering leaflets to a range of community and sporting venues that they and their families attend. A timetable of events for 2022 is currently being planned, and within this it is anticipated that a wider range of events can now be considered and attended as Covid restrictions are lifted which will result in a better response rate. For example we have booked a stall at two events to celebrate International Women's Day on 5 and 19 March 2022.
- 4.18.** A working group will be established to deliver the plan for increased activity to promote fostering during Foster Care Fortnight. The Recruitment Champions Group, consisting of foster carers willing to share their ideas about how best to recruit more foster carers and to help us when we attend events and information evenings throughout 2022/23, will also be re-established.
- 4.19.** We are working with the Fostering Network to celebrate the success of the Mockingbird constellations following the launch of our second Mockingbird constellation on 24 January 2022 and to publicise the success of this family orientated 'hub and spoke' model of fostering.
- 4.20.** We are working with colleagues in the Marketing and Communications Team on launching a fresh campaign for Foster Care Fortnight to launch our new 'BE THERE' campaign and to consolidate our targeted recruitment to attract

more foster carers who can offer home to sibling groups, teenagers, and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

**4.21.** Updates and events will be published on our website and the Marketing and Communications Team have made a commitment to send out messages via social media every 2-3 days to raise awareness of the crucial role our foster carers have in providing permanence and stability to some of our most vulnerable children and young people.

**5. Implications**

**5.1. Legal**

**5.1.1.** This report demonstrates the council's adherence to its obligations under the Fostering National Minimum Standards. Legal advice will be sought, as appropriate, upon all relevant emerging issues.

**5.2. Finance**

**5.2.1.** There are no financial implications of this report. In-house fostering is one of the most cost effective options for the council.

**5.3. Human Resources**

**5.3.1.** Changes to working arrangements as a result of the pandemic are outlined in the reports.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Alison Talheth <a href="mailto:Alison.Talheth@cheshireeast.gov.uk">Alison.Talheth@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a>
Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None



*Working for a brighter future together*

## **Corporate Parenting Committee**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	15 March 2022
<b>Report Title:</b>	Corporate Parenting Committee Forward Plan
<b>Report of:</b>	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
<b>Ward(s) Affected:</b>	All

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### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1.** This paper presents a proposed forward plan of reports for the Corporate Parenting Committee for 2022-23 (Appendix 1) to support the committee to fulfil its role as given in its terms of reference:

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

- 1.2.** The committee is required by its terms of reference to receive a number of key annual reports, these are included within the forward plan.
- 1.3.** This report supports the work of the committee in achieving the aim in the council's Corporate Plan to 'be the best Corporate Parents to our children in care.'

### **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1** As above.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1.** The committee is asked to approve the forward plan of reports for the Corporate Parenting Committee for 2022-23.

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1. Agreeing a forward plan for the year ensures that the committee has oversight of the key areas for cared for children, young people, and care experienced adults, which will support the committee to fulfil its role as defined within its terms of reference.
- 4.2. The committee will continue to operate as it does currently, and additional reports may be added to the forward plan throughout the year as required to allow services to effectively support children and young people, or at request from the committee.

#### **5. Other Options Considered**

- 5.1. The committee may choose not to have a forward plan, however this is not recommended as it may mean the committee does not receive reports on all the key areas for cared for children, young people and care experienced young adults, which could compromise the effectiveness of the committee in fulfilling its role.

#### **6. Background**

- 6.1. The forward plan has been developed based on the key outcomes we want to achieve for cared for children and young people – that they:
  - make decisions **together** with us about their support and their futures, and receive the support they need to thrive from us as their corporate parents
  - achieve good educational outcomes and are supported to develop the skills they need to have a fulfilling and successful career
  - have a stable, safe and loving home
  - are healthy – physically and mentally
  - have the skills they need to be prepared for adulthood and independence.
- 6.2. It is proposed that committee meetings will be themed, so that each meeting focuses on one of these key outcomes. These themed meetings will allow for a deep dive on each topic and the progress to date. Themed meetings of the committee will allow meetings of the shadow committee to follow the same themes. This will support cared for children and young people to give their views on what needs to happen next to improve outcomes in each area.
- 6.3. The aim is that a themed focus will support deeper and more meaningful discussion within the committee and shadow committee, as attention will not need to be divided across different topics. This themed focus will replace the current update reports to each meeting which cover the priorities in the current Corporate Parenting Strategy.

- 6.4.** The forward plan has also been informed by the feedback from committee during this year:
- The committee requested that feedback from the shadow committee was added as a standing agenda item – this has been incorporated within the forward plan.
  - The committee requested further information on data and performance, and for this to be presented within a clear context. It is proposed that a report will accompany the quarterly Corporate Parenting Scorecard which will give further context to the performance information and will provide narrative around the drivers for performance and impact on children and young people. The performance report presented to this meeting demonstrates the format this report would follow.
- 6.5.** For the meeting in November, we will ask young people if they would like to take over the meeting for November Children’s Rights Month.

## **7. Consultation and Engagement**

- 7.1.** Cared for children and young people will be consulted on the activity of the committee through the shadow committee. Themed meetings of the committee will allow for themed meetings of the shadow committee, which will support meaningful engagement from children and young people on what needs to happen to improve outcomes and experiences for cared for children and care experienced adults.

## **8. Implications**

### **8.1. Legal**

- 8.1.1. The committee is required to fulfil its terms of reference which are included within the constitution.

### **8.2. Finance**

- 8.2.1. There are no financial implications.

### **8.3. Policy**

- 8.3.1. This report supports the work of the committee in achieving the aim in the council’s Corporate Plan to ‘be the best Corporate Parents to our children in care.’ Agreeing a forward plan for the year ensures that the committee has oversight of the key areas for cared for children, young people, and care experienced adults, which will support the committee to fulfil its role as defined within its terms of reference.

### **8.4. Equality**

- 8.4.1. There are no implications for equality, diversity and inclusion. The theme of working together with cared for children and young people, and care experienced adults will allow the views of children and young people to be heard. The theme on safe and stable homes will allow scrutiny of whether

we have the right homes to offer different communities of children and young people and to meet diverse needs.

**8.5. Human Resources**

8.5.1. There are no human resource implications.

**8.6. Risk Management**

8.6.1. The forward plan will support the committee to have oversight of all the key areas for cared for children, young people and care experienced adults.

8.6.2. There is no risk to specifying a forward plan as additional reports may be added to the forward plan throughout the year as required to allow services to effectively support children and young people, or at request from the committee.

**8.7. Rural Communities**

8.7.1. All communities are affected by the contents of this report.

**8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children**

8.8.1. The forward plan will support the committee to have oversight of all the key areas for cared for children, young people and care experienced adults.

8.8.2. Themed meetings of the committee will allow for themed meetings of the shadow committee, which will support meaningful engagement from children and young people on what needs to happen to improve outcomes and experiences for cared for children and care experienced adults.

**8.9. Public Health**

8.9.1. The theme on health and wellbeing will ensure that the physical and mental health of cared for children and young people is prioritised.

**8.10. Climate Change**

8.10.1. The theme of having a safe and stable home will consider where our cared for children and young people currently live. There is a commitment to ensure that our cared for children live as close to home as possible, whenever this is safe to do so, so they can stay connected with their family, friends and local community. This also reduces our geographical footprint as travel is reduced.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Lauren Conway Business Manager – Children and Adults Services <a href="mailto:Lauren.conway@cheshireeast.gov.uk">Lauren.conway@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a>
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Corporate Parenting Committee Forward Plan 2022-23
Background Papers:	None



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## Corporate Parenting Committee Forward Plan 2022-23

28 June 2022

Item	Lead Officer
<b>Standing items</b>	
Update from Shadow Committee	Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Committee Chair and Annemarie Parker, HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers
<b>Themed focus – working together with children and young people and being good corporate parents</b>	
Corporate Parenting Annual Report	Annemarie Parker Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Corporate Parenting Strategy	Annemarie Parker HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers, Gill Betton, HoS Children’s Development and Partnerships
Children and Young People’s Plan	Gill Betton, HoS Children’s Development and Partnerships

6 September 2022

Item	Lead Officer
<b>Standing items</b>	
Update from Shadow Committee	Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Committee Chair and Annemarie Parker, HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Corporate Parenting Scorecard Q4 and covering report	Annemarie Parker, HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers, and Bev Harding, Business Intelligence Manager
<b>Themed focus – preparing for adulthood and independence</b>	
Care Leavers Annual Report	Steve Nevitt Service Manager for Care Leavers and Sam Ankers Team Manager for Care Leavers
Care Leavers Survey Results	Annemarie Parker HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers

1 November 2022 – potential takeover for November Children’s Rights Month

Item	Lead Officer
<b>Standing items</b>	
Update from Shadow Committee	Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Committee Chair and Annemarie Parker, HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Corporate Parenting Scorecard Q1 and covering report	Annemarie Parker, HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers and Bev Harding, Business Intelligence Manager
<b>Themed focus – education, employment and training</b>	
Virtual School Headteachers Annual Report	Laura Rogerson, Head of Service Inclusion
Cared for Survey Results	Annemarie Parker, HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers

Children's Rights Annual Report (Advocacy and Independent Visitors)	Sue Preston, Manager Children's Society
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## 10 January 2023

Item	Lead Officer
<b>Standing items</b>	
Update from Shadow Committee	Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Committee Chair and Annemarie Parker, HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers
<b>Themed focus – safe and stable homes</b>	
Cared for Sufficiency Update	Dave Leadbetter, Head of Service Children's Commissioning
Adoption Update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adoption Service Annual Report</li> <li>Adoption Panel Annual Report</li> </ul>	Gail Spray, Head of Service Adoption Counts, and Nicola Booth, Service Manager Adoption Counts
Fostering Update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fostering Service Annual Report</li> <li>Fostering Panel Annual Report</li> <li>Fostering recruitment update and plans for Foster Carer Fortnight</li> </ul>	Nick Crick, Head of Service Fostering

## 7 March 2023

Item	Lead Officer
<b>Standing items</b>	
Update from Shadow Committee	Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Committee Chair and Annemarie Parker, HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Corporate Parenting Scorecard Q2 and covering report	Annemarie Parker, HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers and Bev Harding, Business Intelligence Manager
Review of the Corporate Parenting Terms of Reference	Lauren Conway, Business Manager
Corporate Parenting Forward Plan for 2023-24	Lauren Conway, Business Manager
<b>Themed focus – health and wellbeing</b>	
Health of Cared for Children Annual Report and Mid-Year Report	Shan McParland, Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children

## 27 June 2023

Item	Lead Officer
<b>Standing items</b>	
Update from Shadow Committee	Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Committee Chair and Annemarie Parker, HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Corporate Parenting Scorecard Q3 and covering report	Annemarie Parker, HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers and Bev Harding, Business Intelligence Manager
<b>Themed focus – working together with children and young people and being good corporate parents</b>	

Corporate Parenting Annual Report	Annemarie Parker HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Update from councillors on engagement with services	All committee members
IRO Annual Report	Nabeel Chaudhry, HoS Safeguarding

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