

Corporate Parenting Committee

Agenda

Date: Tuesday, 7th March, 2023
Time: 2.00 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 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.

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

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2023.

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

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

5. **The Health of Cared for Children and Young People Annual Report 2021 - 2022**
(Pages 7 - 18)

To consider the Health of Cared for Children and Young People annual report.

For requests for further information

Contact: Josie Lloyd

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E-Mail: josie.lloyd@cheshireeast.gov.uk with any apologies

6. **Cheshire East Fostering Panel and Fostering Service Annual Reports 2021 - 2022** (Pages 19 - 42)

To consider the annual reports of the Fostering Panel and the Fostering Service.

7. **Cared for Children and Care Leavers Quarter 3 Scorecard 2022/23** (Pages 43 - 54)

To consider the performance for the Cared for Children and Care Leavers service for quarter 3 of 2022-23.

8. **Proposal to change meetings to quarterly and review of the terms of reference** (Pages 55 - 62)

To consider a proposal to change the frequency of the committee meetings and review the terms of reference.

Membership: Councillors Q Abel, M Asquith, R Bailey, J Barber, J Buckley, C Bulman, P Butterill, K Flavell (Chair), S Handley, S Holland, D Jefferay and J Saunders (Vice-Chair)

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Committee**
held on Tuesday, 10th January, 2023 in the Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

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

Councillors M Asquith, J Buckley, C Bulman, S Holland, D Jefferay and
B Puddicombe

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
Georgie Fletcher, Deputy Virtual School Headteacher
Annie Britton, Lead Participation Worker - Youth Support Service
Nicola Booth, Operations Manager – Adoption Counts
Alice Taylor, Adoption Counts
Josie Lloyd, Democratic Services Officer

56 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Bailey, Cllr Barber, Cllr Butterill and Cllr
Handley. Cllr Puddicombe attended as a substitute.

57 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

58 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2022 be agreed as a
correct record.

59 UPDATE FROM SHADOW COMMITTEE (VERBAL)

A Christmas lunch event for Care Leavers had taken place on 22
December 2022 with positive feedback received. Attendees were in
support of it being an annual event.

The committee were reminded that they were welcome to attend a
meeting of the Shadow Committee and that this could be arranged through
the Corporate Parenting Committee Chair.

60 CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE NAME CHANGE

The committee received the report which recommended a name change for the Corporate Parenting Committee to reflect the wishes of cared for children and care leavers who had asked for professionals to simplify the language that is used when working with them or making decisions about them.

It was noted that the term 'Corporate Parent' was a statutory term that would remain so would still be referred to in some contexts.

A report would go to the Children and Families Committee for endorsement before the Constitution would be updated to reflect the change.

RESOLVED:

That the name of the Corporate Parenting Committee is changed to the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee in response to feedback from care experienced children and young people.

61 ADOPTION COUNTS - ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT AND ADOPTION PANEL CHAIRS SIX-MONTHLY REPORT

The committee received the report which outlined the delivery of adoption services and outcomes for children.

There was a concern around court delays, some of which appeared to be due to delays in receiving medical reports. It was noted that Cheshire East was one of the highest performing local authorities for timeliness but that the team were aware of these delays and were focused on ensuring they were reduced.

A query was raised regarding funding for the educational psychology service and whether the funding would continue. The committee were advised that the team were not aware of any reason as to why it would not continue but that this could not be confirmed until agreed by the board.

It was noted that there had been a fall in adoption applications nationally and a query was raised as to whether this was expected to worsen due to the cost of living crisis. The committee were advised that this was difficult to predict but that Adoption Counts had still seen good engagement and would regularly review the situation.

RESOLVED:

That the Corporate Parenting Committee:

1. Note the contents of the Adoption Counts Adoption Service annual report, and the Adoption Panel Chairs six monthly report.
2. Provide support and challenge in respect of the reports.

62 INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

The committee received the Independent Reviewing Officers Annual Report for the period 2021 – 2022.

A query was raised as to whether there were enough Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs). The committee were advised that the team were stretched sometimes at various points throughout the year but that the IROs were good at managing their time. It was raised that sometimes the IRO reports were not received at the Fostering Panel and the committee were advised that this would be looked into going forward.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

63 CORPORATE PARENTING Q2 SCORECARD 2022/23

The committee received the Corporate Parenting scorecard for quarter 2 of 2022 – 2023.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 14:00 and concluded at 15:37
Councillor K Flavell (Chair)

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**The Health of Cared for
Children and Young People
Annual Report
April 2021 – March 2022**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report covers the period from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. It is written to provide assurance that during the reporting period NHS Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group met the statutory requirements in commissioning services to identify and meet the health needs of the Cared for Children population of Cheshire East. It is produced in line with duties and responsibilities outlined in the 'Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health of Looked after Children (LAC): Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities, Clinical Commission Groups and NHS England' (2015); The Children Act (1989) and The Children Act update (2004); and Looked After Children: knowledge, skills and competence of healthcare staff (Intercollegiate Role Framework, 2020).
- 1.2 During the reporting period NHS Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group were committed to working with partner agencies to ensure the safety, health and well-being of all the cared for children and care leavers in Cheshire East. Recognised as the most vulnerable in our society, it is essential that we ensure safe and effective services are delivered with a focus on quality and patient experience, and with the key priority of enabling every child to go on to achieve their full potential in adulthood.
- 1.3 This report sets out the range of activities, developments, achievements, and challenges that our cared for children team have been involved in across Cheshire East and identifies key service priorities for 2022-23. We want to first recognise the global pandemic COVID 19 affected everyone in the Cheshire community.
- 1.4 The Covid-19 pandemic continued to have global impact throughout 2021/22. In April 2021, the UK remained in lockdown status. As the lockdown levels gradually lifted throughout 2021 for the general population, health providers continued to work with ongoing Covid restrictions. A further peak in Covid cases in Winter 2021/2022 impacted on service delivery across the NHS due to both increased demand and Covid-related sickness within the NHS workforce.

2. CARED FOR CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS

2.1 Looked After Children are those that are looked after by the Local Authority, either voluntarily or through a statutory order granted in court. In Cheshire East, Looked After Children are referred to as 'Cared for Children', in line with their wishes.

2.2 **Table 1**, below, shows the numbers of cared for children in Cheshire East at the end of quarter 4 2021/2022 (*data as reported by health*):

Total number of Cheshire East Council cared for children placed in area	303
Total number of Cheshire East Council cared for children placed out of area	197
Number of children in care of other local authorities placed in Cheshire East.	205

3. THE RESPONSIBLE COMMISSIONER

- 3.1 During the reporting period NHS Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group were the responsible commissioner of health services for children and young people who were taken into the care of Cheshire East Local Authority. When children are placed out of area it is the responsibility of the Local Authorities as lead agencies to notify NHS organisations to ensure that these children and young people maintain access to relevant health services. This included the originating Clinical Commissioning Group and the receiving Clinical Commissioning Group in the area where the child or young person is placed (Department of Health 2015).
- 3.2 In Cheshire East, whenever a child or young person is moved to an area outside the Clinical Commissioning Group (Integrated Care Board, from July 2022) boundaries, a formal transfer of information is completed by the Cared for Children Health Team and sent to the team with responsibility for the health of looked after children in the receiving area.
- 3.3 Responsibility for requesting, monitoring and quality assuring review health assessments for children and young people placed out of area remains with the Cared for Children Health Team in Cheshire East.

4. REDUCING UNWARRANTED VARIATION FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC)

- 4.1 *'There is unwarranted variation across England in the quality of the arrangements in health services for child safeguarding and for looked after children. These are some of society's most vulnerable children'* (Not Seen, Not Heard. Care Quality Commission. 2016).
- 4.2 NHS England and NHS Improvement have identified reducing unwarranted variation for Looked After Children as a key area of focus. The primary areas of unwarranted variation are:
- Access to timely and quality health services regardless of where Looked After Children are placed in the United Kingdom.
 - Health commissioning pathways to meet the statutory duties for all Looked After Children are complex and there is no single service specification for delivery across the Regional and National footprint.
 - Access to mental health services for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
 - Structures and systems to support healthcare teams are not always in place, and vary across the United Kingdom.

4.3 Throughout 2021-2022, work has continued across the Cheshire footprint to address these issues. The health system together with the Local Authorities as 'Corporate Parents' have high aspirations to improve outcomes for these children and young people.

5. CARED FOR CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVER ACHIEVEMENTS AGAINST PRIORITIES FOR APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022

5.1 **Table 2** below demonstrates our actions and achievements against the 2021/2022 priorities including actions against those still in progress or not yet complete.

Table 2: Actions and achievements against the Clinical Commissioning Group 2021/2022 priorities

2021/22 Priorities	We have
Continue to review the arrangements for Initial Health Assessments: the current arrangements for the notification of a child entering care, requesting an initial health assessment and recording completion are fragmented due to the different processes in place with different providers. This needs to be reviewed and consideration given to streamlining the process to reduce the risk of breaches of statutory timescales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed and updated the Initial Health Assessment processes for children coming into the care of Cheshire East. The Designated Nurse regularly tracks Initial Health Assessments for all children brought into care across Cheshire and challenges any issues regarding timeliness.
Annual Quality Assurance visit to Provider services to be completed by Designated Nurse: This will serve to provide assurance to the Clinical Commissioning Groups that the services provided meet statutory requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality Assurance visits were suspended due to Covid 19 restrictions, however regular virtual meetings were held with the provider and assurance was provided through annual submission of commissioning standards and quarterly quality reports. Face to face visits to be completed during 2022/23.
Development of an effective tool that can be used to measure health outcomes for Cared for Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Liverpool quality assurance tool was adopted by the provider service, which has an ability to collect and record health information relating to individual children during the health assessment quality assurance process. Work will continue in 2022/23 to review themes and trends recorded and how they can evidence health outcomes for children and inform service delivery.
Review of the health summary document, and pathway for completion, for care leavers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following an initial review the previous year, the following were implemented in 2021/22: An Easy Read version was implemented for care leavers with additional needs, which can be personalised to individual level of need. Care Leavers are provided with two copies of

2021/22 Priorities	We have
	the health summary so that they can share a copy with another professional such as their Personal Advisor if they wish
Development of a robust system to ensure effective tracking and monitoring of both Cheshire Looked After Children placed out of area, and Looked After Children placed in Cheshire by other Local Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed and updated notification systems across health and Local authorities. • The health Provider now has a dedicated Nurse Specialist who has oversight of Cheshire East children placed out of area.

6. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS: INITIAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

- 6.1 It is a regulatory requirement throughout England that each Looked After Child has a comprehensive health assessment (Initial Health Assessment) and a health care plan in place prior to the first Looked after Children Care Plan review which takes place at 20 working days from entry to care. The Initial Health Assessments are completed by Paediatricians.
- 6.2 The quality of completed Initial Health Assessments is monitored by the Designated Doctor for Cared for Children and any quality concerns are raised directly with the practitioner who completed the assessment. The Designated Doctor provides annual training for the doctors in the department and provides supervision on a 1:1 basis if needed. Any training grade doctors performing Initial Health Assessments will receive training and supervision before and after completion of the assessment to ensure a good quality assessment. The Designated Doctor has a requirement to receive Level 5 safeguarding training.
- 6.3 There has been a shared Initial Health Assessment pathway in place for use by health and social care practitioners since 2013. The pathway includes details of the timescales for notification by Children's Social Care to community paediatricians to ensure Initial Health Assessments are completed within statutory timescales. Timely notification to health services is crucial to support the completion of high-quality health assessments for children coming into care within statutory timescales. This pathway is continuously reviewed to ensure it remains relevant to the Local Authority and each provider.
- 6.4 There continues to have been improved performance in the timeliness of requests by Cheshire East Council for the completion of Initial Health Assessments during 2021/2022, within an average of 71% of requests being received in timescale over the course of the year. Requests are triggered by a notification that a child has entered care. In the event of a late request being received by either of the two providers, every effort is made to ensure

that the Initial Health Assessment is still completed within 20 working days. This will remain a priority area of focus and partnership working will continue throughout the coming year to identify and address the reasons for late Initial Health Assessment requests including escalation to the team managers within the Local Authority.

- 6.5 Prompt completion of an Initial Health Assessment is essential to ensure identification of a child or young person's health needs, and when delayed there is the risk that health issues remain unaddressed. There is a potential for this risk to increase when a child is placed a considerable distance outside the Cheshire East footprint. The Initial Health Assessment Pathway has been reviewed to ensure that there is clarity regarding the arrangements for requesting a health assessment for a Cheshire Cared for Child when they are placed out of area, and further work to strengthen this arrangement continues on an ongoing basis as processes adapt and change.
- 6.6 Themes have been identified by the Providers as reasons why Initial Health Assessments are completed outside the statutory timescale. In addition to late requests from the Local Authority, other reasons recorded include cancelled appointments because children have been unwell or on holiday, children declining appointments or not attending without explanation. The Designated Nurse escalates all issues relating to either late requests or children not being brought to appointments to the Child's Social Worker for action. If this is not actioned in a timely manner the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children will escalate to their manager so further action can be taken. Initial Health Assessment performance data is also a standing item on the agenda at the Health and Local Authority Partnership meetings which are held bi-monthly and provide opportunity to analyse data and identify areas where improvement is required.

Compliance of timescales for completion of Initial Health Assessments within Cheshire East has improved steadily over 2021/22 but has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. There continues to be significant issues with timescales for Cheshire East children placed out of area. The Designated Nurse continues to escalate with the receiving CCGs in these cases.

Table 3: shows the comparison of completed IHA's percentages in Cheshire East

Areas	Initial Health Assessments completed within 20 days (100% target)	Initial Health Assessments completed within 20 days (100%target)	Initial Health Assessments completed within 20 days (100%target)	Initial Health Assessments completed within 20 days (100%target)
	Quarter 1: 2021/22	Quarter 2: 2021/22	Quarter 3: 2021/22	Quarter 4: 2021/22
Cheshire East	44%	66%	76%	72%

- 6.7 There is further work to do to achieve aspirations of ensuring that all children entering care are supported to have their health care needs identified and met in a timely way and

this will continue to be a priority during 2022-23. The primary focus for action will be around:

- Review of the pathway to escalate late Initial Health Assessment requests which is shared across Cheshire East.
- Greater scrutiny of cancelled appointments or those that children are not brought to without explanation. Information regarding any missed appointments will be escalated to Senior Local Authority Managers.
- Programme of education and training for social care staff and carers by health practitioners in order to ensure the Initial Health Assessment process and pathway is understood, and the relevant documentation, supporting information and referral letters are completed.
- Exploration of new ways to arrange initial health assessments utilising a single point of contact within the Local Authority and the providers. This would help in reducing the number of teams handling and processing data, and the number of steps required to manage the whole process.

7. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - REVIEW HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

- 7.1 The Local Authority must ensure that every child and young person in their care has an up-to-date individual health plan, the development of which should be based on the written report of the health assessment. The health plan forms part of the child's overall care plan. Children under the age of 5 years must have a Review Health Assessment twice in a twelve month period, whilst children age 5 years and above have their health needs reviewed annually.
- 7.2 Review Health Assessments for Cheshire East Cared for Children are generally carried out by health visitors, school nurses, family nurses and sometimes by community paediatricians (if the child has complex health needs and is already under regular review by the community paediatrician).

8. TIMELINESS OF REVIEW HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

- 8.1 Statutory timescales are in place for the completion of Review Health Assessments. This is monitored via the data included in the quarterly Safeguarding Assurance Framework provided by Wirral Community Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust.
- 8.2 The data in **Table 4** demonstrates that during 2021/22, Cared for Children placed out of area were more likely to experience their Review Health Assessment being completed late. It is recognised that there is often some difficulty in influencing timescales for

completion of Review Health Assessments when a child is placed in another area, and many areas are experiencing continued capacity issues due to the ongoing pandemic response. Timeliness for Review Health Assessments for those Cared for Children placed within Cheshire East was better, although in Quarter performance did reduce due to impact of Covid related sickness absence within the provider workforce. Close scrutiny and monitoring of this performance indicator will continue I 2022/23 to ensure that our Cared for Children are receiving timely, high quality statutory health assessments irrespective of where they are placed.

Table 4: Percentage of Review Health assessments completed within timescale in Cheshire East

Cheshire East	Quarter 1 2021-22	Quarter 2 2021-22	Quarter 3 2021-22	Quarter 4 2021-22
Children placed <u>IN AREA</u>	73%	91%	82%	66%
Children placed <u>OUT OF AREA</u>	62%	48%	71%	63%
Children in the care of other Local Authorities	92%	96%	74%	70%

9. THEMES IDENTIFIED DURING HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

9.1 Throughout 2021-22, themes identified at health assessment have remained consistent with previous years and include:

- Emotional wellbeing, including difficulties relating to attachment and previous trauma
- Mental health disorders
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Sleep problems
- Smoking and substance use
- Complex physical health needs
- Social and communication difficulties
- Exploitation
- Missing from home episodes
- Self harm

9.2 Gaps/Risks identified

- Specialist support services for attachment difficulties
- Mental/emotional health support for care leavers up to age 25 years
- Accessing health services for our Cared for Children placed out of area
- Notification process for children placed in Cheshire East by other Local Authorities
- Engagement of some children and young people with the current health assessment process

10.DENTAL CHECKS

10.1 There can be difficulties with obtaining and reporting on dental data due to both the number of dental practices that cared for children are receiving treatment from, and the lack of a single method for collecting the information. **Table 5** below indicates the percentages of cared for children who were up to date with their dental check on 31.03.2022 and the 4 years before. Whilst performance has improved on the previous year, pre-pandemic attendance figures has not yet been reached. In conjunction with NHS England a local scheme has been developed whereby Cared for Children who are struggling to access a dentist due to lack of availability can be referred to a commissioned provider. This will help to improve performance for 2022/23 and dental checks will be a key priority for the coming year.

Table 5: Percentage Comparison from 2018 to 2022 of Looked After Children who have visited a Dentist

Date	Percentage of Cheshire East children who have visited a dentist	National data
31/03/2018	85.2%	84%
31/03/2019	75.7%	85%
31/03/2020	75.3%	86%
31/03/2021	38%	40%
31/03/2022	51%	70%

11. IMMUNISATIONS

11.1 National data relating to the year 2021/22 is 85% Local data analysis indicates that on 31st March 2022, 97% of Cared for Children in Cheshire East who had been in care for twelve months or more had received their age appropriate immunisations.

12. DEVELOPMENTAL CHECKS

12.1 Compliance with the healthy child programme is excellent and performance indicator for the percentage of Cared for Children who have had a developmental check in line with national requirements was 94% in Cheshire East.

13. CARE LEAVERS HEALTH SUMMARY

13.1 All young people who leave care when they reach their 18th birthday should receive a summary of their health history. During 2021/22 the Nurse Specialists have continued to develop an effective system for ensuring that young people are leaving care at the age of 18 years with a meaningful, relevant summary of their health history. Engagement has been

successful in a large proportion of cases and has involved an innovative and constantly evolving approach to access even the most hard to reach young people. At the end of 2021/22, there were 55 young people reaching their 18th birthday in Cheshire East and they all received a Care Leavers Health Summary.

14. UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKERS

- 14.1 During 2021/2022 the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children has remained relatively steady within Cheshire East. It is recognised that many of these young people have experienced significant adverse life events both within their countries of origin, and during their journeys to the United Kingdom. The resulting physical, emotional and mental health needs of this group of young people can be particularly complex and specialist support services are frequently required.
- 14.2 In Cheshire East a welcome pack was developed by the Specialist Nurse 16+ and Transitions last year which provides comprehensive health advice and guidance on accessing services. This year the welcome pack was professionally published into an A5 booklet and is now available in hard copy or electronically for professionals to use with unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

15. CHILDREN IN CARE PRIORITIES APRIL 22 – MARCH 23

- 15.1 **Table 6** below demonstrates the Clinical Commissioning Group (Integrated Care Board from July 2022) priorities for 2022/2023.

Table 6: NHS Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group (NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board from July 2022) Looked After Children's Priorities of 2022-2023

2022/23 Priorities	How we will do it	Timescale
Continue to review the arrangements for Initial Health Assessments: the current arrangements for the notification of a child entering care, requesting an initial health assessment and recording completion are fragmented due to the different processes in place with different providers. This needs to be reviewed and consideration given to streamlining the process to reduce the risk of breaches of statutory timescales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Providers and Local Authorities to review current arrangements and develop processes which simplify and streamline, reducing opportunities for delay of notification or allocating appointments within statutory timescales. Continue to track Initial Health Assessments for all children brought into care across Cheshire and challenge any issues regarding timeliness. 	March 2023
Annual Quality Assurance visit to Provider services to be completed by Designated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Designated Nurse will complete quality visits to specialist nursing teams in both 	March 2023

2022/23 Priorities	How we will do it	Timescale
Nurse: This will serve to provide assurance to the Clinical Commissioning Groups that the services provided meet statutory requirements.	<p>providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A report and action plan will be produced following quality visit which will be reviewed quarterly. 	
Development of an effective tool that can be used to measure health outcomes for Cared for Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Designated Nurse will work with colleagues across the North region within the Regional Looked After Children Designated Nurses Network Group. Introduction of a system to collect and record health information relating to individual children during the health assessment quality assurance process. 	March 2023
Review of the health summary document, and pathway for completion, for care leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A group to include children and young people to be established in both Local Authority areas to review current document and agree changes required. 	March 2023
Improve attendance for annual dental checks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of dental escalation pathway for those children who cannot access an NHS dentist locally amongst health and social care professionals. Routine review of dental attendance within Cared for Reviews Review of administration process for recording dental attendance within children's records. One page guide for carers to be developed , advising of routine health requirements for Cared for Children, including dental checks. 	March 2023

16. RECOMMENDATIONS

16.1 The information contained in this report demonstrates that we continued to ensure robust commissioning arrangements are in place for safeguarding and the important work with partners to support service development, delivery and governance arrangements.

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Cheshire East

**TOGETHER for Children
and Young People**

Together we will make Cheshire East a great place to be young

Cheshire East Fostering Service Annual Report

April 2021 – March 2022



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1. Cheshire East Fostering Service

Cheshire East is a busy, long-established local authority fostering service, which undertakes the full range of fostering work from mainstream recruitment and assessment to family and friends (connected persons) assessment and training, support, and supervision of all carers.

The staff teams which make up the fostering service are centralised and have an office base in Middleswich, although the majority of staff continue to be able to work remotely with a recent return to a 40%/60% of office-based presence and continued remote working. It covers the whole of Cheshire East, which is a large geographical area.

The fostering service in Cheshire East recruits, trains and supports mainstream and connected carers, so that we can place children and young people in high quality foster placements close to their family, friends and school. It is a regulated service and is subject to inspection under the Care Standards Act 2000.

We aim to provide internal high quality, stable placements for children with mainstream and connected foster carers, who can meet their needs, and who have high quality support, supervision, and training.

The service is founded on good relationships with foster carers, with children and their social workers. We aim to work in partnership with foster carers, ensuring that foster carers have a voice and to be involved in the development of the service, and to this end we have significantly strengthened our consultations with foster carers and the ways in which we involve them in service development.

Where it is possible to do so, children will be supported within their own family with the provision of necessary services to ensure that children are safe and protected. If this is not possible, then they will whenever it is safe and appropriate be placed with extended family as connected carers in their own community.

The Head of Service is responsible for the strategic development of the fostering service and line management of the Fostering Service Manager who is responsible for ensuring that the Fostering Service meets the statutory duties and responsibilities required by the National Minimum Standards (NMS) and Fostering Regulations.

The NMS, together with Regulations relevant to the placement of children in foster care such as the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (the 2011 Regulations), form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 (CSA) for the conduct of fostering services.



The fostering support workers provide support to the service in respect of ensuring that recruitment activity is undertaken, checks are completed and who provide general and targeted support, for example, running groups for sons and daughters, for new foster carers to complete their Training and Development Standards and some general support groups such as 'Walk and Talk'. Fostering support workers are loosely attached to each of the teams.

The Service Manager works closely with the Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (FIRO) who is line managed within the independent Safeguarding, Review and Quality Assurance Service.

The Business Administrative Support Team is line managed through a separate line of accountability but is also part of the fostering service.

2. Teams in the Fostering Service

We have five teams in the Fostering Service:

- **Mainstream Recruitment and Assessment Team** – is comprised of 2.5 full time equivalent supervising social workers and a team manager – involvement in and oversight of all mainstream recruitment activity, responding to initial enquiries, arranging, and undertaking initial visits and undertaking full fostering assessments and presenting these to the Fostering Panel.

The team have been providing support and supervision to new carers following approval until the first review at 6 months. The supervising social worker will ensure that the carers have a good induction and complete the required training to start them off in their fostering journey.

The training officer post is also located in this team, and this worker provides Skills to Foster training for both mainstream and connected carers prior to their full approval, as well as ensuring that mandatory training is undertaken by carers, and developing a training programme for the year which is engaging and challenging for foster carers.

Fostering support workers also provide support to this team by undertaking phone calls, initiating statutory checks on applicant carers and proving necessary equipment to carers.



- **Connected Carer Assessment and Support Team** – is currently comprised of 8.5 full time equivalent supervising social workers and a team manager.
- This team's primary function is the assessment, support and supervision of family and friends (connected foster carers). SWs from the team go out with children's social workers to see family and friends named by children's parents when a child needs to be looked after by someone other than a birth parent.
- Supervising SWs will advise and support the child's social worker in the application of fostering regulations and to assist in determining suitability of family and friends to be assessed under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Review Regulations to be given temporary approval as a foster care to provide emergency care to a child who is accommodated by the local authority.
- The team also undertake viability assessments and full fostering assessments of connected carers and provide support and supervision once children are placed and/or when full approval is given.
- Much of the work of this team is driven by court timescales and most assessments are filed within the care proceedings. Where the overall care plan is one of a Special Guardianship Order (SGO), this team will undertake the SGO assessment.
- Some SGO assessments are 'private' in the sense that the child is not a cared for child and there may only have been limited involvement from children's services for the child.
- There is a small sub-team in this team, consisting of a supervising social worker, a half time education support worker and a family support worker who is also part time. This sub team have oversight of all Special Guardians in Cheshire East and provide support groups and training to this group, as well as individual support where this is needed.
- The children in this group are generally not open to social care, and the input is to support the whole family rather than being on an allocated child basis. Fostering support workers also provide support to this team by undertaking phone calls, initiating statutory checks on applicant carers and providing necessary equipment to carers.
- **Mockingbird Support and Supervision Team** –this team is comprised of two supervising social workers and a team manager.



- One of the supervising social workers is the liaison worker required by the Mockingbird model and this worker supervises the hub home carer for each constellation and also some of the constellation carers.
- There are significant reporting and fidelity requirements associated with Mockingbird, and this team collates that information which is fed back to the Fostering Network. This team has also been working on the development of the second constellation which launched on 27 January 2022.
- The Mockingbird team also supervises and supports some mainstream carers who are not Mockingbird carers. This is a legacy position because the staff were already established in the support and supervision team before moving across to the newly established Mockingbird team, and where possible we try not to disrupt carers support experience by frequent changes of supervising social worker unless that is absolutely necessary.
- The Team Manager of this team also takes a turn in being the Duty Placements Manager to support the placement of children in urgent need of care. Fostering support workers also provide support to this team by undertaking phone calls, initiating statutory checks on applicant carers and proving necessary equipment to carers.
- **Mainstream Support and Supervision Team** – this team is made up of 7.6 supervising social workers and a team manager.
- This team provides support and supervision to mainstream, short breaks carers and some connected carers.
- One supervising social worker in this team takes the lead in urgent placement finding for children and in long term permanent placement finding for children, he works closely with the Placement Team in this regard, which has responsibility for the commissioning of external placements, both fostering and residential for children, he is assisted in this task by a part time fostering support worker.
- Another supervising social worker provides support and supervision to all the short break carers and works closely with the children with disabilities service in order to achieve this, she also has some mainstream and connected carers on her caseload too.



- Fostering support workers also provide support to this team by undertaking phone calls, initiating statutory checks on applicant carers and proving necessary equipment to carers.
- **Business Administrative Support Team** – This team has one full time senior unit coordinator and 4-unit coordinators, one of whom is full time. They provide administrative support to the service in the conduct of fostering checks and data collection.
- This team will also ensure that office telephones are answered, messages are appropriately directed, and will send out communications as required to foster carers.
- A key element of this role is the support to the fostering panel by taking minutes, liaison with the panel chair to ensure that minutes are correct and approved, ensuring that the reports are placed on the SharePoint for panel members to have access to prior to panel, and that the reports and minutes are provided to the Agency Decision Maker in a timely way for the final decision to be made. They then ensure that this is placed on Liquid Logic and that the carer goes on the Register of Foster Carers.

3. Fostering Panel

The Fostering Panel is critical to the business of the Fostering Service and is a legal requirement. The Panel meets approximately three times per month to consider panel business.

A new independent Fostering Panel Chair, Reshma Kodampur was appointed in December 2021 and took over responsibility for chairing the Panel in January 2022, following a brief induction and opportunity to observe the Panel.

The Panel is assisted by Panel Advisor, Richard Watts who is employed by Cheshire East. The service and Panel advisor undertakes the gatekeeping function for Panel to ensure that all matters placed before Panel meet the necessary minimum regulatory requirements. The service advisor has experience of chairing other local authority panels and independent fostering agencies (IFAs) and brings that experience and knowledge to the role.

There is also a vice chair of panel who takes the chair when the usual panel chair is unavailable for some reason. The central list consists of a further eight panel members aside from the chair and vice chair. The service advisor does not sit as a voting panel member, his role is to provide advice to panel and to the service.



There is an annual report for 2021/22 which details the functions and work of the Panel which can be read alongside this report.

4. Fostering Development Board

Oversight and governance of the fostering service provided via a development board which consists of the Head of Service, Service Manager, Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer, Mockingbird Team Manager, Head of Service for Children's Commissioning, and a linked staff member from communications. This group oversee and drive the development plan for the service and ensure that targets are set and adhered to.

5. Summary of 2021 – 2022

This year has been a challenging period nationally for fostering services across the UK as the numbers of children and young people requiring a safe home have risen by 12% but the increase of people who have applied to become foster carers have risen by only 4%.

The Ofsted figures for 2020/21 show that there has been a national trend of increased numbers of people expressing an interest in fostering but a far less conversion rate of people who convert that interest into making an application and taking that step to becoming registered foster carers.

This has led to an increased pressure and demand on foster placements, this can be evidenced by the figures demonstrating the continuing trend to place children in more expensive IFA placements and in some cases placing children in residential care due to the shortage of foster placements for teenagers.

Many Cheshire East internal foster carers have responded to requests for them to consider taking on an additional child and are now providing a higher number of placements per household and many foster carers have come forwards to offer emergency placements for children and young people who have no safe place to stay.

The trend to continue to place children and young people with friends and family has continue to increase and we have seen this part of the service continue to grow.

The fostering service has undertaken a service re-structure that needs to be progressed and finalised. This has been delayed by the changes in the senior leadership team and has caused some instability and anxiety across the staff teams.

5.1 Mockingbird

The development and launch of the Mockingbird extended family model has been very successful in Cheshire East following a successful bid to the Department for Education to work alongside the Foster Network to develop the Mockingbird model.

We now have 2 active Mockingbird constellations each with their own home hub carers who offer excellent support and connections to the fostering households and children who are part of the Model. Foster Carers are very positive about the extended support that is offered by the model.

*There is an annual CE site-level summary workbook for 2021/22, which should be read alongside this report. (Please note that this is a password protected file, password is **Site_summary21/22**)*

The front page of the workbook comprises a dashboard summarising information CE has submitted during the reporting period April 2021 – March 2022. Here you will find a summary of participation in Mockingbird during the year, as well as group activities, support (including sleepovers, daytime support, and one-to-one support) and estimated outcomes

In addition to the dashboard, you can explore the background data on the other worksheets within the workbook. Filters enable information to be sorted by child, satellite family etc. to understand depth of support provided to individual households or journeys for children and young people.

5,2 Mainstream Recruitment and Assessment

Prior to October 2020, Cheshire East had been in a collaborative recruitment arrangement with the other three Cheshire local authorities, and an independent review of the fostering service in January 2020 reached the conclusion that this was not working well for Cheshire East, and the decision was taken to leave Foster 4.

This was planned to have happened at the end of June 2020, however, the Covid pandemic resulted in this being delayed until the end of September 2020, and on 1st October 2020 Cheshire East commenced recruitment under our new 'Together for Fostering' branding.

Enquiry numbers increased significantly, and we were generally undertaking around 12-14 mainstream fostering assessments at any one time. However, it soon became apparent that this would not be a normal year in terms of the expected ebbs and flows of fostering recruitment that usually happen.

It became evident that the reality and practicalities of Covid were disrupting the usual rhythms of foster carer recruitment, and further, that most local authorities nationally and across the Northwest were experiencing this, as well as IFAs.



This has been a trend experienced within Cheshire East and 2021/22 has seen a sharp decline in the number of enquiries and applications from people who wish to foster. There has been increasing pressures and challenges in finding suitable placements for the children and young people who need a safe home.

Number of households approved in the year (and trend)

Year	Primary care type offer	Households number
2017	Permanent	1
2017	Short term	11
2017	Family and Friends	31
2017	Fostering to adopt	4
2017	Short breaks – for children who are also looked after	10
2017	Not Known - deregistered	1
2018	Not permanent	16
2018	Family and Friends	51
2018	Fostering to adopt	1
2018	Short breaks – for children who are also looked after	2
2018	Not Known - deregistered	1
2019	Not permanent	6
2019	Family and Friends	39
2019	Fostering to adopt	1
2019	Not Known - deregistered	1
2020	Not permanent	7
2020	Family and Friends	46
2020	Fostering to adopt	2
2020	Short breaks – for children who are not otherwise looked after	1
2021	Permanent	5
2021	Not permanent	9
2021	Family and Friends	48
2021	Short breaks – for children who are not otherwise looked after	2
2022	Not permanent	11
2022	Family and Friends	49
2022	Fostering to adopt	1
2022	Short breaks – for children who are not otherwise looked after	2



Applications in the year by status

Application status	Households number
In progress	3
Application	3
Approved	5
Withdrawn by applicant	4

5.3 Mainstream Support and Supervision and Retention of Foster Carers

Number of households deregistered in the year (and trend)

Year	Households number
2017	43
2018	59
2019	78
2020	59
2021	36
2022	66

De-registrations in the year by reason

Deregistration reason	Households number
Ceased fostering because the family adopted the child/children	1
Ceased fostering because the family took out a special guardianship order for the child/children	16
Initiated by foster carer	13
Initiated by fostering service	34
Transferred to IFA	1
Unknown	1



5.4 Connected Carer Assessment and Support and Special Guardianship Team

In 2020-21, we did 242 Viability Assessments, of which 81 resulted in a full Fostering Assessment. Of these 81 assessments, 31 resulted in the permanent placement of children. The remaining 50 ended in one of the following options:

- Applicants withdrew
- Applicants were assessed as a contingency and the children were never placed.
- Applicants were considered not suitable to be recommended as alternative carers.

When a child who lives with a connected carer is placed on a full care order at the end of care proceedings, the placement is the permanent home for the child until they are 18 or no longer need to be cared for. During the court process, the needs of the child are considered against the capacity of the carer, and this is a matching process.

In 2021/22, we had 145 referrals for Viability Assessments. This resulted in 44 full connected persons assessments. Of these 44, 7 continue to provide placements to children under Care Orders, 4 have concluded on SGO.

Of the remaining 33,

5 concluded with a negative recommendation

11 withdrew

17 assessments were completed but placements not needed due to care plan decisions (child returned to parents or placed with another family member

We had 21 Reg 24 assessments, of these 10 concluded with full approval, 11 resulted in placements ending before the assessment was finished. We had 5 referrals for private SGO's, of these 4 concluded with orders made, 2 withdrew.

6. Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (FIRO)

All foster carers annual reviews have been chaired by the FIRO who has provided quarterly reports to the Fostering Development Board and the Fostering Panel throughout 2021/22.

Foster carer reviews have generally been held virtually, with some being held face to face. This has worked well for foster carers to have a choice of a virtual or face to face meeting as the covid restrictions has eased throughout 2021-22.



This year has been a challenging in respect of the process and timeliness of foster carers' fostering annual reviews one with the continued themes of: -

- Changes to the paperwork and workflow of the Annual Review process on Liquid Logic records managements system. Work has been completed to update the report format and the reporting of reviews but some glitches have remained as this work is part of the overall modernization of the LCS workflows for fostering
-
- The FIRO has completed work with the LADO to ensure that all allegations and standards of care concerns have timescales and action plans are attached so that when reviews are held foster carers are clear about the work needed and the evidence base that is required for continued approval. This is starting to be embedded into practice and therefore timescales and action are improved.
- There continues to be challenges in obtaining the views of the Cared for Children's Social Workers and children for Foster Carers Annual Reviews. A meeting was held with the Children's council where their views were sought, and these will be incorporated into the new process. This will continue to be part of the role of FIRO in encouraging the completion of these forms and escalating this where appropriate.
- There has been additional challenge in the reviewing service as the FIRO received increased feedback from foster carers that the Referral and Placement Planning Process and the completion of placement planning meetings and required paperwork including the medical and delegated consents is very variable and I am checking on the paperwork and foster carers being provided with sufficient good quality information about children at placement and their knowledge and understanding of Care Plans moving forward. As part of the Liquid Logic update we are requesting improved reporting and scrutiny of this element of the Cared for modules.
- A North West Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer Forum has been created to share good practice and develop common themes and standards for Fostering Reviews. We are group have created practice standards which will ensure that Local Authorities will have a more standardised format and standard for fostering reviews. This group also provides peer support and is developing a mutual information network.
- The second Mockingbird constellation is progressing well and the FIRO has designed a new review format for the home hub carer to reflect this difference in role for them. There is a real sense of the first constellation working well which includes activities for children within the constellation, a comment made by one of the children is that they are enjoying having contact with other cared for children. They have had a beetle drive and virtual bingo in the recent weeks and are planning monthly activities for the children in constellation.



- The FIRO also plans to review the Connected Persons/Family and Friends carers annual review format to ensure that their role is reflected in the paperwork and ensure that children's voices are reflected properly.
- 72% (138) of foster carer reviews were held within the statutory timescales of 12 months on time, and 21.6% (38) were out of timescale. Reasons for being out of timescale usually related to been a Designated Officer investigation.

During reviews, if there are concerns, consistent effort is made to ensure that there is a plan developed that will support the carer through the necessary development and training to resolve the issues. Secure Base interview techniques have been used successfully in this context with some carers.

7. Overall performance of the Service in 2021/22 (Key Performance Indicators)

Number of households and places at 31 March (and trend)

Year	Number of households	Number of places
2017	160	289
2018	169	300
2019	144	230
2020	146	228
2021	162	264
2022	155	261

Number of households by primary care type offer (and trend)

Year	Primary care type offer	Households number
2017	Permanent	40
2017	Not permanent	1
2017	Short term	68
2017	Family and Friends	36
2017	Fostering to adopt	1
2017	Short breaks – for children who are also looked after	10
2017	Short breaks - for children who are not otherwise looked after	4
2018	Permanent	36
2018	Not permanent	72
2018	Family and Friends	50
2018	Short breaks – for children who are also looked after	8
2018	Short breaks - for children who are not otherwise looked after	3
2019	Permanent	39
2019	Not permanent	57
2019	Family and Friends	35
2019	Fostering to adopt	1
2019	Short breaks – for children who are	9



	also looked after	
2019	Short breaks - for children who are not otherwise looked after	3
2020	Permanent	37
2020	Not permanent	50
2020	Family and Friends	48
2020	Fostering to adopt	1
2020	Short breaks – for children who are also looked after	6
2020	Short breaks - for children who are not otherwise looked after	4
2021	Permanent	40
2021	Not permanent	53
2021	Family and Friends	62
2021	Short breaks – for children who are also looked after	2
2021	Short breaks - for children who are not otherwise looked after	5
2022	Permanent	38
2022	Not permanent	53
2022	Family and Friends	57
2022	Short breaks – for children who are also looked after	5
2022	Short breaks - for children who are not otherwise looked after	2

Number of carers at 31st March by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number of carers
Any Other Ethnicity	4
Asian Other	2
Black African	1
Black Caribbean	1
Mixed Other	1
White British	245
White Irish	1

Number of carers at 31st March by training status

TSD status	Number of carers
Not known 6	6
Not yet commenced	57
Training in progress	22
Awaiting sign off	2
Workbook Completed	168



Placement use at 31st March

Number of children	Number of vacant places	Number of not available places	Number of places used for SB care
197	19	40	7

Number of not available places on 31st March by reason

Not available reason	Number of not available places
Carer reasons (not otherwise specified)	10
Carer(s) taking a break/pending resignation	3
Carer(s) under investigation	4
Needs of child currently in placement (not otherwise stated)	3
Only available if sibling group placed	10
Used by CYP Staying Put after turning 18	5
Used for Short Breaks - CYP not otherwise looked after (POFShC)	5





Fostering Panel Annual Report

1 April 2021- 31 March 2022

Foreword

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of Cheshire East Council's Fostering Panel for 2021/22 on behalf of our new Independent Fostering Panel Chair, Reshma Kodampur who joined us just before the final quarter of this year, on 17/12/21 and after observing the Panel on 17/12/21 and 07/01/22, chaired her 1st Panel on 24/01/22. On behalf of the panel I offer her a warm welcome

Reshma is a qualified social worker with significant experience as a Panel Advisor and Senior Manager in Fostering and detailed knowledge and understanding of the Fostering Regulations. She brings with her a fresh approach and leadership, to quality assurance and challenge function of the Panel to ensure that those children and young people who require a foster placement are provided with the highest quality of service.

This has been a challenging year for the Fostering Panel, as Children's Services have continued face the pressures arising from the impact of Covid Pandemic on the delivery of services, raise in the numbers of children and young people needing safe homes, falling numbers of applications nationally from people who wish to foster and on public finances.

There have been several changes in the structure and leadership of the Fostering Service and in some of the paperwork presented to Panel. The number of Panels held across the year has continued to increase to manage the increased volume of business generated across the service.

This year we also said goodbye to Independent Panel Chair, Audrey Williamson in July 2021. Audrey provided experienced leadership through a period of significant change and turbulence. I take the opportunity acknowledge the contribution Audrey made, to thank her for her tenure as Panel Chair and to wish her well in her future endeavours.

During the recruitment to a new Panel Chair, we were fortunate that Vice Chair, Pauline Barber stepped up to cover the gap left by Audrey, providing much needed continuity and a steady hand to ensure that Panel business was unaffected by the ongoing turbulence. Pauline has been an Independent Panel Member since July 2018. She has a wealth of experience in education and special needs, a keen focus on the voice of the child and sits on several other Local Authority and Independent Fostering Panels.

We have benefitted from dedicated, stable, and experienced Panel Members throughout this period, who also bring a wealth of experience, skills, and knowledge to enable them to continue to scrutinise the service and to make safe recommendations.

Dr Pari Sreekumar, Panel Medical Advisor has sat on the Panel since 02/09/13. Independent Member, Gill Merry, who previously sat as an Elected Member has been a member of the Panel since 27/10/14. Independent Member and Social Worker, Dianne Grant, joined the Panel on 24/09/18.

Independent Member, Lindsay Henretty has sat on Panel since 15/07/19. Independent Member and Social Worker, Tim Hancock, who is also an experienced foster carer, has sat on the Panel since 05/08/19. Independent Member Tina Powell joined on 28/08/19

The Panel was joined by Councillor Carol Bulman on 22/02/21, a committed and knowledgeable Elected Member, who is helpful both for her contribution to the Panel's deliberations and for providing a link with the local authority's wider corporate parenting agenda.

The Panel have welcomed and supported some new independent Panel Members this year to include, Eoanna Stathopoulos as Independent Member with a Social Work qualification on 21/05/21 and Tracy Weaver as an Independent Member, who is an experienced Foster Carer with CW&C on 02/07/21

The Panel has continued to receive reliable support from Panel Advisor, Richard Watts throughout this period alongside the Panel Administrators, all of which has been critical to maintain Panel's smooth running and the timeliness of recommendations to the Service following meetings.

The Fostering Panel has a crucial role and is very well placed to have a positive influence on practice for children and young people. The Fostering Service has evidenced a willingness to be receptive to advice and constructive challenge and welcomes this in our commitment to ensuring that we provide a quality service.

1.Introduction

Although there is no statutory or regulatory requirement for an annual report of the Fostering Panel to be produced, this report is intended to contribute to the *Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards – Standard 14*:

- Panel/s provide quality assurance feedback to the fostering service provider on the quality of reports being presented to Panel.

It will also follow good practice guidelines which suggest that the annual report should have a wider remit, commenting on the work of the Fostering Panel, its constitution, and arrangements with the service.

1.1 Constitution of Cheshire East Fostering Panel

Cheshire East Council is a local authority fostering service. Its Fostering Panel has several regulatory functions which are listed under the *Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 - regulation 25*. They are to:

- Make safe recommendations about the approval of foster carers.
- Recommend foster carers terms of approval.
- Consider the first fostering annual review of foster carers and any other review if requested by the fostering service provider, and to recommend the continuing approval of carers.
- Advise, where appropriate, on the procedure for reviews of carers and periodically to monitor their quality and effectiveness.
- Oversee the conduct and quality of assessments carried out by the fostering service provider.
- Give advice and make recommendations on other matters or cases referred to it by the fostering service provider.

In addition to the functions listed in the Fostering Regulations, the Cheshire East Council Fostering Panel considers and makes recommendations concerning proposed permanent matches of children with foster carers for all children.

1.2. The relevant Legislation, Guidance and Standards for the Fostering Panel are:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services
- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.
- Family and Friends Care: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities 2011.
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010

- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Adoption and Care Planning (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2014
- Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015
- Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4: Fostering Services, 2013
- The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020; The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2020, as amended by The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (up to 30.09.21).

The composition of Fostering Panels, terms of reference and functions are set out in the [Fostering Services \(England\) Regulations 2011](#).

All fostering service providers are legally required to have a Fostering Panel. The Regulations ensure that Fostering Panels have an independent role separate from the fostering service provider.

2.Meetings and Venue

Throughout 2021/22 the Cheshire East Council Fostering Panel have continued to meet virtually using Microsoft Teams.

The usual frequency of Panel meetings has increased in 2020-21 from an average of 1.5 per month to 3 per month, held on Mondays and Fridays. This increase better reflects service demand.

3.Number and frequency of Fostering Panels

Year	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	Total
2019/20													
2020/21													28
2021/22	3	2	3	3	2	3	2	4	2	3	1	3	31

The Fostering Panel meets on Mondays and Fridays. The above chart highlights the continued increase in the number of Panels over the past 3 years from an average of 1.5 Panels a month to an average of 3 x a month.

4.Development

Fostering Panel development is an ongoing process. New Panel Members should have an induction which will include an opportunity to observe a Panel.

Panel members should each have an annual appraisal. Individual Panel Members' appraisals take place with the Panel Chair and Panel Advisor. Members will fill in a self evaluation form ahead of the appraisal meeting.

Panel appraisals took place on 29/07/21 with Dr Sreekumar, Pauline Barber, Diane Grant, Gill Merry, Lindsay Henretty and Tina Powell and on 11/08/21 with Tim Hancock. All of the Panel Members had undertaken relevant training and development with Cheshire East Panel on the development of Mockingbird Constellation and outside of this either independently or through their other roles and work experience.

Members highlighted the following general points as part of the annual appraisal process:

What is working well

- Induction was good.
- Covid has impacted on everyone involved in Panel and we have all adapted well to the new ways of working
- SharePoint as a way to securely access Panel Paperwork is working well
- Having an additional member of Panel avoids the last minute rush to find someone in order to remain quorate if Panel member is ill etc
- Panel members have a good mix of knowledge, skills and backgrounds
- All Panel members are very professional
- It is very useful to have a medical person on the Panel
- Minutes are produced in a timely way
- Papers are distributed so Panel Members have 5 days to read them
- Individual Panel Member are comfortable in expressing views and opinions
- The chair has evolved an ethos where everyone's views and opinions are valid regardless of whether they differ
- Every Panel member's views are listened to and are mutually respected

Areas for improvement

- Virtual Panels miss some of the more nuanced messages
- Panel could be more reflective.
- Need to improve diversity of the Panel / Central List requires ongoing refresh
- Need to improve links with Service

- Sourcing a young person's voice when they want to speak to us, not when we need to speak to them
- There should be more joint SSW/FC training events
- Advice Tracker process has been slow in developing by CEC
- Papers need to be distributed so Panel Members have 5 days to read them
- Training on SCR's
- Panel Members would like to hear about more national developments, and projects for fostering, comparing other models and innovative practice experiences from a national and/or global level
- Members would like training on attachment

A Panel development session was held on 17/01/22. This was led by the New Panel Chair, Reshma Kodampur and Service Advisor, and focused on areas of development for Panel and their quality assurance function.

5.Quality of Applications to Panel

There is a quality assurance framework in place to ensure that the paperwork for Fostering Panel is quality assured by the fostering team managers before submitting this to the Panel Advisor for gatekeeping two weeks prior to a case being heard at the Panel.

Upon receipt of the Panel papers the Panel Chair will review the papers and check with the Panel Advisor that all the necessary paperwork is present to enable the Panel to hear the case. When reading the assessment reports, all Panel Members routinely check that all required basic components of an assessment have been completed, for example:

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

When introducing each item, the Chair seeks confirmation from the Panel Members that the reports provide enough information on which to base the discussion, on the understanding that any specific gaps could be filled by the presenting social workers or foster carers.

The opportunity to comment on matters of practice, including timeliness, is available when issues for discussion are identified. The Panel will prepare individual feedback on each case.

6.Panel Advice and Impact

The Fostering Panel continues to comment on the quality of applications made but it also makes comment and offers advice on practice to the service. This is done with the intention of helping to improve fostering practice and care planning for children, which happens by way of a written tracker to record any Panel issues or queries, and the service then responds to those queries in writing.

On occasion there are also discussions between the service and the service advisor on practice matters. Any issues which are of concern and are not responded to, or it is believed escalation is required, are escalated further up the hierarchy. This adds as an effective safeguard for both the service and Panel and is not intended to undermine anyone in the service.

7.Voice of the Child

Panel is clear that the voices of children and young people who are looked after should be heard at Panel to ensure the recommendations it makes are well informed. This remains a significant aspect of Panel's work and requires improvement.

8. Experience of Attendees at Panel

All Panel users are routinely sent feedback forms alongside the invite to Panel however this year there has been a very low return rate from Panel Users.

Key areas for 2021-23

- Increase the diversity of Fostering Panel membership.
- Improve information sharing between the fostering service and Fostering Panel and ensure all workers understand Panel and that there is open communication through to other parts of the service. Operating virtually can be isolating if this is not worked upon.
- Ensure that there is a clear training programme in place for all Panel members and that they continue to be offered annual appraisals.
- That further work is undertaken to ensure the Panel advice tracker is completed and the outcomes returned to Panel.
- During 2020-21, a Panel information leaflet was not available to give to prospective foster carers who are undergoing the assessment process. This needs to be developed and shared with Panel attendees.
- That the Panel and the service continue to seek the voice of children to contribute to Panel items.



Working for a brighter future together

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting:	7 March 2023
Report Title:	Cared for and Care Leavers Q3 score card 2022/23
Report of:	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
Ward(s) Affected:	All Wards

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1.** This report sets out the performance for corporate parenting for quarter 3 of 2022-23 (1 October 2022 – 31 December 2022). The cared for children and care leavers committee is asked to note the performance for quarter 3 and to provide support and challenge in relation to performance in relation to cared for children and care leavers.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1** This report provides an overview of quarter 3 performance for children and families services for the relevant indicators for the reporting year of 2022-23

3. Recommendations

- 3.1.** The Cared for and Care Leavers Committee is asked to:
- 3.2** note the performance of children's services for quarter 3.
- 3.3** provide scrutiny in relation to performance in relation to cared for children and care leavers.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. One of the key areas of focus for the cared for children and care leavers committee is to review performance and scrutinise the effectiveness of services for cared for children and young people and care leavers.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. Not applicable

6. Background

- 6.1. This quarterly report provides the committee with an overview of performance across cared for children and care leaver's service. This report relates to quarter 3 of 2022-23 (1 October 2022 – 31 December 2022).

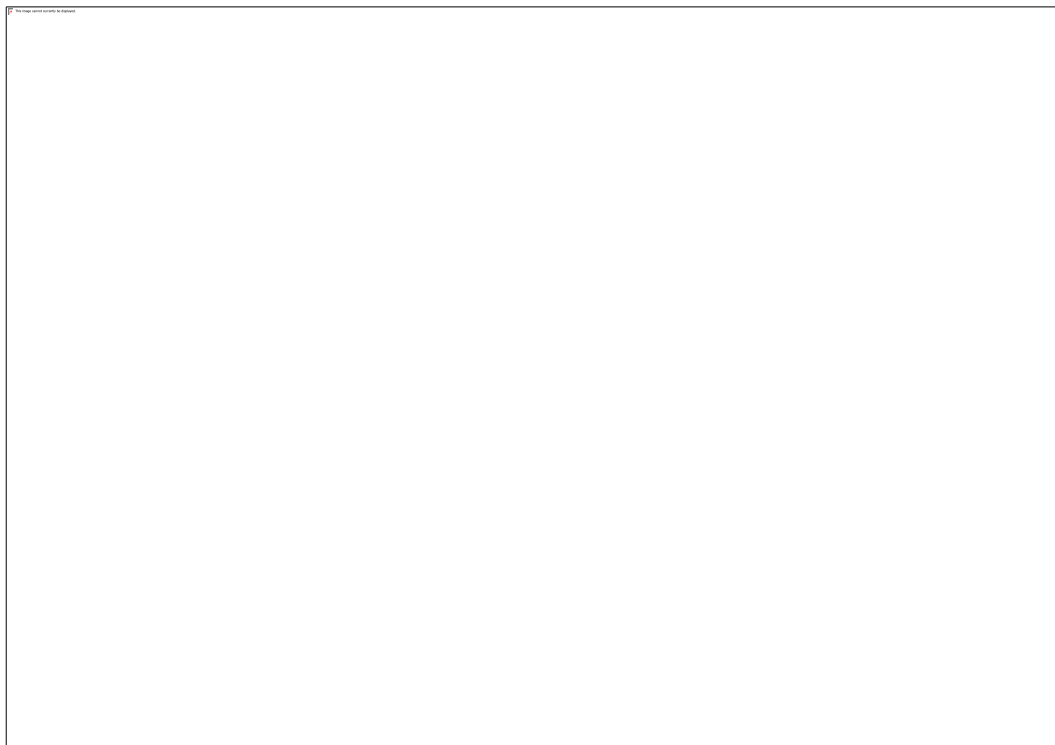
- 6.2. The following indicators have been highlighted for consideration

7. Briefing information

- 7.1 Cheshire East Council were responsible for 557 cared for children at the end of quarter 3. The cared for children population changes daily as children enter and leave care. Children cease to be cared for due to several reasons, these include turning 18, returning to their birth family, adoption, and special guardianship. The latest comparable data we have across the region shows that Cheshire East's rate is slightly above the national average of 67 per 10,000 and is above that of our statistical neighbours. Comparator data relates to 21/22 and so is not an up-to-date reflection of the national or statistical neighbour data.

- 7.2 Much of the increase in cared for children relates to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) becoming cared for. In Q2 we had 34 UASC in Cheshire East, in Q3 this rose to 56. We have seen an increase in young people who have been placed in hotels by the Home Office, who subsequently challenge their age and are then accommodated if they are assessed as being under 18. We know that regionally as a local authority, we are the 3rd highest in terms of our UASC numbers. We are constantly monitoring the numbers of cared for children 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 (13 February 2023) we have discharged care orders for 17 children and there are several applications currently before the court so we are hopeful that this number will increase. Overall last year, we achieved 17 discharges of care orders and 7 the year before. The progress we are making represents a positive picture. We currently have 44 children placed with their parents on a care order, in Q1 we had 60 and in Q2 we had 54. This is consistent progress and demonstrates a commitment to not intervening in children's lives when this is not necessary.

- 7.3** The additional capacity through the commissioned managed service (7 social workers and a team manager) has also brought some short-term stability to the service. At the time of writing this report, the cared for service has 9.5 permanent social work vacancies out of an establishment of 24. This is an improving picture as within Q2 we had 12.5 permanent vacancies. Work is being undertaken with HR colleagues to consider how we retain our existing workforce and how we recruit experienced social workers. Below is a graph which shows how caseloads across the services are reducing. Within the cared for service, all vacancies are currently being covered by either the managed service or agency staff.



- 7.4** The timeliness of cared for children's reviews continues to be good, although this has dipped slightly to 82% in Q3, in Q2 this was at 93%. We know that most reviews were re-scheduled within a few days and were therefore only marginally out of timescale. There has been some sickness within the safeguarding service which has impacted upon timeliness, we have also seen an increase in our cared for children's numbers. Additionally, 92% of children were involved in their reviews. It is 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.
- 7.5** Q3 data shows a decrease in children placed with in-house foster carers (117 in Q3 compared to 130 in Q2). However, positively, the number of children placed with connected carers has increased from 99 in Q2 to 109

in Q3. This means that children are living with someone with someone they have an existing relationship with. 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.

- 7.6** We continue to work hard to reduce the number of children in residential care and this number does fluctuate due to the availability of foster placements and the needs of our children and young people. In Q2, the number of children living in residential care was 30, in Q3 this has increased to 36. We remain committed to ensuring that children have the opportunity of living within a family wherever possible. Currently we have 6% of our cared for children living in residential care, the national average is 10%. Currently, we have 3 children living in an unregistered placement. All 3 of these children are over 16. This is not our ambition for any of our children but is a result of pressures within the placement market. We are currently looking at how we can increase our in-house residential provision thus reducing the need to use unregistered provisions for our children and young people.
- 7.7** The number of adoptions continues to slowly increase with 11 children adopted so far this year and another 15 living in their adoption placements. Positively, we also have 3 children who are placed in foster to adopt placements. Of the 11 children legally adopted so far this year, unfortunately the number of days from entering care to moving into placement with an adoptive family is skewed by a small number of children where there has been delay. The time taken to achieve permanence is beneficial to the child however does impact negatively upon our figures. For example, 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.
- 7.8** Placement stability for cared for children needs to improve. We know that due to a shortage of foster placements, some children experience several moves. A new head of service for Provider Services commenced

employment in January 2023 and is hoping to be in a position where she can develop the service to improve stability for children. We have also developed a permanence tracker which will assist in monitoring and driving forward children's plans.

- 7.9** 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.
- 7.10** The NEET data for our 19 to 21-year-old young people shows that 48% of this cohort are not engaged in education, employment, or training. The national average for 2020/21 was 38% with statistical neighbours being 37%. Comparative data for 22/23 is not available. However, in a recent meeting with Ofsted they confirmed that the national average for NEET exceeded 40%. 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. We know that our increasing population of UASC young people are not always able to access ESOL courses as many colleges are full. Our Virtual School are providing creative ways of ensuring that these young people are receiving an education whilst they await a college place. We have also developed a NEET challenge panel where we will consider what support we can provide to our young people on an individual basis.
- 7.11** The next NEET programme is currently being planned and it is anticipated that this will be well attended. 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. The Virtual School are currently building a business case to seek funding to see if this course can be run on a continual basis rather than twice per year. This is in recognition that previous NEET programmes have seen real successes for our young people.
- 7.12** Most health assessments are being requested within 48 hours of children entering care (88% in Q3) this is an increase from 66% in Q2. 46% of newly cared for children have had their initial health assessment within 20 days in Q3. This has declined from 53% in Q2. We know that our increase of UASC cared for children has resulted in some delays because of additional complexities such as ensuring an interpreter is present. This data has been 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. Positively 83% of

cared for children had a health assessment within the last 12 months, this is an improving picture.

7.13 Q3 data shows an increase in children seeing a dentist to 64% from 44% in Q2. We are working at how we capture this data as we believe these figures are not a true representation and hope to see further improvement in Q4. Where foster carers are struggling to find children a dentist, this issue is being escalated to health and a dentist will be identified. There is an identified pathway for escalation of such issues within Cheshire and Merseyside.

7.14 Q2 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. We do not have any young people in emergency accommodation.

7.15 81% of care leavers have up-to-date pathway plans and 78% of care leavers had their plans reviewed within timescales. Pathway Plan reviews have now transferred to the safeguarding service to ensure that our care leavers have their pathway plans reviewed in a timelier way and to allow for external scrutiny. We have recently been working with Stockport and have engaged in some sector lead improvement work around our Care Leavers. This work has been beneficial, and we have implemented some ideas to ensure that our care leavers have the very best opportunities.

8. Consultation and Engagement

8.1. Not applicable.

9. Implications

10. Legal

10.1. There are no direct legal implications.

11. Finance

11.1 There are no direct financial implications or changes to the MTFs because of this briefing paper.

11.2 Policy

12.1 There are no direct policy implications.

12. Equality

13.1 Members may want to use the information from the performance indicators to ensure that services are targeted at more vulnerable children and young people.

13. Human Resources

14.1 There are no direct human resources implications.

14. Risk Management

15.1 There are risks associated with some performance measures, e.g. increases in demand and timeliness of services.

15. Rural Communities

16.1 There are no direct implications for rural communities.

16. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

17.1 Performance reports enable members to identify areas of good performance and areas for improvement in relation to children and young people, including cared for children.

17. Public Health

18.1 There are no direct implications for public health.

18. Climate Change

19.1 This report does not impact on climate change.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Annemarie Parker
Appendices:	Corporate Parenting Score Card Q3
Background Papers:	None

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December 2022 - Cared for and Care Leavers Scorecard - This contains a rolling 4 quarters for comparison													
Notes: The boxes that are grayed out are where national data is not applicable or data isn't available.													
Notes: The column highlighted in blue reflects the most recent quarter being reported on													
Notes: Rates are calculated using the 2020 ONS mid year population estimate 0-17 of 78,068 (Office of National Statistics) and are calculated as a rate per 10,000 children aged 0-17. This enables the local authority to be compared on a like for like basis with different local authorities or groups of authorities.													
Priority	Indicator	Indicator name	21/22 outturn	Q4 21/22	Q1 22/23	Q2 22/23	Q3 22/23	22/23 outturn	Benchmark National (most recent available)	Benchmark Stat N'bour (most recent available)	Corporate Plan Aim	Acronym	Notes
General	G1	Number of cared for children	522	522	522	540	557				Fair		
	G2	Rate per 10,000 cared for children	67	67	67	69	71		67	60	Fair		2021/22 comparitors updated
	G3	Number of care leavers (aged 16-21)		248	279	292	302				Fair		
Priority 1 - We will care for our Children and Young People as any good parent would	1.1	% cared for children reviews in timescales	90%	90%	94%	93%	82%				Fair		
	1.2	% of children and young people involved in their reviews	99%	99%	95%	95%	92%				Fair		
Priority 2 - Improved Education, Employment and Training outcomes	2.1	Number of 16-18 year olds in care that are NEET (monthly)		8	7	14	14				Fair	NEET - Not in Education, Employment or Training	NEET - Not in Education, Employment or Training
	2.2	Number of 16-18 year old care leavers that are NEET		9	13	0	0				Fair	NEET - Not in Education, Employment or Training	NEET - Not in Education, Employment or Training
	2.3	Number of care leavers accessing higher education (University)		18	19	20	19				Fair		
	2.4	Number of Cheshire East care leavers in apprenticeships (18+)		7	8	6	10				Fair		
	2.5	% 19-21 year care leavers that are NEET (as per national reporting)	40% NEET at birthday	41%	46%	46%	48%		38% NEET at birthday	37% NEET at birthday	Fair	NEET - Not in Education, Employment or Training.	2021/22 comparitors updated. Whereas the quarterly collection is the yp status at the end of the qtr, The DfE comparator figures relate the each yp status around the time of their birthday during the collection year.
ne and keep them safe	3.1	Number of cared for children in external foster care		135	138	130	139				Fair		
	3.2	Number of cared for children in internal foster care		120	123	130	117				Fair		
	3.3	Number of children in care living with relatives and friends (inc reg 24)		79	79	99	109				Fair	Reg 24 -Regulation 24	
	3.4	Number of children placed with parents		53	60	54	44				Fair		
	3.5	Number of children and young people in residential care		31	36	30	36				Fair		
	3.6	Number of individuals with 3 or more placements (rolling 12mth figure)		61	64	66	68				Fair		2021/22 Comparitors (PERCENTAGE of Cared For Childrenwith 3 or more placements in the year): CE 12%, Statistical Neighbours 10%, All England 10% .

Priority	Indicator	Indicator name	21/22 outturn	Q4 21/22	Q1 22/23	Q2 22/23	Q3 22/23	22/23 outturn	Benchmark National (most recent available)	Benchmark Stat N'bour (most recent available)	Corporate Plan Aim	Acronym	Notes
Priority 3 - We will work to give all children and young people a forever home	3.7	% cared for children in care for at least 2.5yrs at the end of the period and living in their current placement for at least 2 years	69%	70%	67%	65%	66%		71%	72%	Fair	#NAME?	2021/22 comparitors updated. Uses NI63 specification: Children Aged under 16, and where a child is placed for adoption, do not count the move to adoptive placement.
	3.8	Number of cared for children placed over 20 miles from home address (Cheshire East and out of borough)		123	122	121	125				Fair		
	3.9	Number of children living out of borough		206	214	207	237				Fair		
	3.10	Number of cared for children who have been missing in the quarter		33	35	44	35				Fair		
	3.11	Number of children who have a long term matched placement		132	133	123	126				Fair		
	3.12	Number of placement moves in the quarter		67 (55 individuals)	63 (48 individuals)	105 (82 individuals)	103 (85 individuals)				Fair		
	3.13	% of currently cared for children who have had a C&F assessment in the last 12 mths			84%	79%	80%				Fair	C&F - Children and Family	
	3.14	% of Cared for Children in care for more that 1 mth who have had a review in the last 6 mths			98%	91%	90%				Fair		
	3.15	% of children ceased to be looked after due to granting of special guardianship order (SGO) - year to date figure	11%	11%	8%	6%	9%		13%	12%	Fair	SGO - Special Guardianship Order	2021/22 comparitors updated
	3.16	% of children ceased to be looked after due to adoption - year to date figure	9%	9%	11%	8%	8%		10%	11%	Fair		2021/22 comparitors updated
	3.17	Number of children with an adoption decision		25	33	34	37				Fair		
	3.18	Average number of days between entering care and moving in with adoptive family (A10 national indicator) - yearly figure		611	589	613	647		376		Fair		
	3.19	Average number of days between placement order and match with adoptive family (A2 national indicator) - yearly figure		212	219	240	286		185		Fair		
Health and Wellbeing Outcomes	4.1	% of initial health assessments requested within 48 hours of coming into care		84%	71%	66%	88%				Fair		
	4.2	% of initial health assessments completed by paediatricians within 20 working days		69%	68%	53%	46%				Fair		
	4.3	Children looked after who had their annual health assessment (%)	80% (OC2 cohort)	74%	80%	75%	83%		89% (OC2 cohort)	86% (OC2 cohort)	Fair		2021/22 Comparitors updated. The published comparitors from the DfE SSDA903 return uses the 'OC2 cohort' of children i.e. Children who have been in care at least 1 year at 31st March.
	4.4	Children looked after who had their teeth checked by a dentist in the last 12 months (%)	51% (OC2 cohort)	42%	37%	44%	64%		70% (OC2 cohort)	65% (OC2 cohort)	Fair		2021/22 Comparitors updated. The published comparitors from the DfE SSDA903 return uses the 'OC2 cohort' of children i.e. Children who have been in care at least 1 year at 31st March.

Priority	Indicator	Indicator name	21/22 outturn	Q4 21/22	Q1 22/23	Q2 22/23	Q3 22/23	22/23 outturn	Benchmark National (most recent available)	Benchmark Stat N'bour (most recent available)	Corporate Plan Aim	Acronym	Notes
Priority 4 - We will Improve	4.5	% of 4-16 in care for 3 months or more with a completed SDQ score in the last 12 mths	57% (OC2 cohort)	40%	45%	42%	65%		77% (OC2 cohort)	75% (OC2 cohort)	Fair	SDQ - Strenghts and Difficulties Questionnaire. T	2021/22 Comparitors updated. The published comparitors from the DfE SSDA903 return uses the 'OC2 cohort' of children i.e. Children who have been in care at least 1 year at 31st March.
	4.6	% of young people with a SDQ score of 20 or above	36% (OC2 cohort)	30%	29%	31%	27%		37% (OC2 cohort)	40% (OC2 cohort)	Fair	SDQ - Strenghts and Difficulties Questionnaire.	2021/22 Comparitors updated. The published comparitors from the DfE SSDA903 return uses the 'OC2 cohort' of children i.e. Children who have been in care at least 1 year at 31st March.
	4.7	Number of care leavers with a health passport		12/15 80%	14/14 100%	12/16 75%	8/14 57%				Fair		
Priority 5 - We will prepare young people for Adulthood	5.1	% of care leavers aged 16-21 with an up to date pathway plan in the last 6 mths			81%	80%	81%				Fair		
	5.2	% of pathway plan reviews completed in timescales in the quarter			53%	92%	78%				Fair		
	5.3	% of pathway plan reviews completed in the quarter where Young persons view were not sent/ gained			38%	6%	12%				Fair		
	5.4	% of former relevant care leaver aged 18-21 that we are in touch with			98%	99%	99%				Fair		
	5.5	% of 16-17 years old currently cared for with a PA allocated			53%	46%	52%				Fair	PA - Personal Advisor	
	5.6	% of 17-18 former relevant care leavers in suitable accommodation	95% at yp birthday		89%	92%	97%		90% at yp birthday	88% at yp birthday	Fair		2021/22 comparitors updated. Whereas the quarterly collection is the yp status at the end of the qtr, The DfE comparator figures relate the each yp status around the time of their birthday during the collection year.
	5.7	% of 19-21 former relevant care leavers in suitable accommodation	97% at yp birthday	89%	96%	95%	97%		88% at yp birthday	88% at yp birthday	Fair		2021/22 comparitors updated. Whereas the quarterly collection is the yp status at the end of the qtr, The DfE comparator figures relate the each yp status around the time of their birthday during the collection year.
	5.8	Number current UASC being cared for	21	21	24	34	56				Fair	UASC - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker	
	5.9	Number current/ former UASC care leavers (aged 18-24)			55	58	64				Fair	UASC - Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker	
	5.10	Number of individuals in staying put arrangement		38	38	31	36				Fair		

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Working for a brighter future together

Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee

Date of Meeting:	7 March 2023
Report Title:	Proposal to change meetings to quarterly and review of the terms of reference
Report of:	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
Ward(s) Affected:	Not applicable

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report proposes that from the new committee year (from May 2023 onwards) the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee meets on a quarterly basis, instead of bi-monthly.
- 1.2. The committee is also requested to review its terms of reference as this is required on an annual basis.
- 1.3. The Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee contributes to delivering the priority in the council's Corporate Plan 2021-25 to be the best corporate parents to our children in care.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. This report proposes that from the new committee year (from May 2023 onwards) the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee meets on a quarterly basis, instead of bi-monthly.
- 2.2. The committee is also requested to review its terms of reference as this is required on an annual basis.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. The Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee is recommended to:
- 3.2. Endorse that the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee meets on a quarterly basis from the new committee year (from May 2023 onwards).

- 3.3.** Review and endorse the proposed changes to the terms of reference (Appendix 1).

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1.** Members of the committee have previously raised during meetings that the business of the committee could be conducted effectively on a quarterly basis. Three of the four meetings held to date since June 2022 have been shorter than the allocated two hours, with two being under one hour. Therefore, holding the committee on a quarterly basis would be a more efficient use of councillor and officer time and would not impact on the business of the committee.
- 4.2.** Holding the committee on a quarterly basis would allow the committee dates to be in sync with quarterly performance reports which would support effective scrutiny of outcomes for cared for children and young people and care leavers.
- 4.3.** There is no risk to reducing the frequency of meetings, as additional meetings can be requested if required. The committee currently has five meetings a year due to the committee calendar, so meeting on a quarterly basis would only reduce the number of meetings by one meeting.
- 4.4.** The constitution requires that the terms of reference (Appendix 1) are reviewed on an annual basis. Proposed changes have been included to the terms of reference to reflect the change of name from the Corporate Parenting Strategy to the Cared for and Care Leaver's Strategy, the change of name to the committee as agreed in the meeting on 10 January 2023 which was endorsed by the Children and Families Committee on 13 February 2023, and to reflect the proposal for quarterly meetings. Point 2.4 has been amended to reflect that Cheshire East Council does not provide residential homes for children and young people.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1.** The Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee could remain as meeting bimonthly but this would not be as effective in terms of use of resources.
- 5.2.** The constitution requires that the terms of reference are reviewed on an annual basis, so there is no alternative option for this. The proposed changes do not need to be agreed.

Option	Impact	Risk
Keep the committee meeting on a bimonthly basis	The committee is not able to benefit from more efficient use of councillor and officer time, and aligning the	None

	committee with quarterly performance reports.	
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6. Background

- 6.1.** The Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee is responsible for ensuring 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. It holds services and partners to account for the discharge of their responsibilities.
- 6.2.** A proposed forward plan for quarterly meetings is included in Appendix 2. This covers all the areas and reports currently received by the committee, therefore under quarterly meetings the committee would still carry out the same amount of business.

7. Implications

7.1. Legal

- 7.1.1.** There are no specific legal implications.

7.2. Finance

- 7.2.1.** The proposal to move to quarterly meetings should allow us to use resources more effectively by streamlining administration outside of the meeting and reducing travel.

7.3. Policy

- 7.3.1.** There are no policy implications.

7.4. Equality

- 7.4.1.** There are no implications for equality, diversity or inclusion.

7.5. Human Resources

- 7.5.1.** Changing the frequency of meetings will support more efficient use of councillor and officer time.

7.6. Risk Management

- 7.6.1.** There is no risk to reducing the frequency of meetings, as additional meetings can be requested if required.

7.7. Rural Communities

- 7.7.1.** There are no implications for rural communities.

7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1. Holding the committee on a quarterly basis would allow the committee dates to be in sync with quarterly performance reports which would support effective scrutiny of outcomes for cared for children and young people and care leavers.

7.9. Public Health

7.9.1. There are no public health implications.

7.10. Climate Change

7.10.1. Holding the committee on a quarterly basis will reduce the number of meetings per year by one meeting, which will reduce the carbon footprint of the committee by reducing travel.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Lauren Conway, Business Manager Lauren.conway@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1: Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee Terms of Reference Appendix 2: Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee Forward Plan 2023-24
Background Papers:	None

Appendix 1:

Cared for Children and Care Leaver **Committee Terms of Reference**

Membership: 12 Councillors

Additionally the committee is informed by representative young people from My Voice (Cheshire East's Children in Care Council) to advise the committee.

The Chair is the Lead Member for Children and Families.

Functions

1. The purpose of the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee in its role as an advisory committee to the Children and Families Committee is to ensure that the council effectively discharges its role as corporate parent for all children and young people in care and care leavers from 0- 25 years of age and holds partners to account for the discharge of their responsibilities.
2. The committee's responsibilities include:
 - 2.1. acting as advocate for cared for children and care leavers, ensuring that their needs are addressed through key plans, policies and strategies throughout the council and its commissioned services;
 - 2.2. ensuring key strategic plans relating to children in care and care leavers are in place and are delivered including the Cared for Children and Care Leaver's Strategy, Sufficiency Statement and Children and Young People's Plan;
 - 2.3. overseeing the implementation of Cheshire East's Cared for Children and Care Leaver's Strategy and action plan and monitoring the quality and effectiveness of services to ensure that they fulfil the council's responsibilities;
 - 2.4. oversight and scrutiny of the quality of care in residential children's homes for Cheshire East children and young people through visits and reports, including summary reports of Ofsted inspections;
 - 2.5. reviewing the performance of the council in relation to outcomes for children and young people in care via the scrutiny of both quarterly performance reports and annual reports including the Health of Cared for Children and Care Leavers, the Virtual School, Fostering and the Independent Reviewing Service;
 - 2.6. establishing an environment whereby Councillors and young people work together to address the needs and aspirations of Cheshire East's children and young people in care and empower children and young people to participate in decision making with adults;

- 2.7. overseeing with the Children and Families Committee the implementation of best practice principles in all aspects of service delivery, with the aim of producing positive outcomes for children and young people in care;
- 2.8. supporting the work of foster carers and adopters in making a difference to the care and support they provide;
- 2.9. making sure that staff and partners commit to follow the pledges to cared for children and young people and care leavers set out in the Cared for Children and Care Leaver's Strategy.

Governance

- 3. The committee will:
 - 3.1. meet quarterly;
 - 3.2. report to the Children and Families Committee on at least an annual basis; and
 - 3.3. review its terms of reference annually.
- 4. The Committee will be serviced by Democratic Services.
- 5. Minutes and agendas will be distributed and published no later than 5 clear working days prior to the meeting.

Appendix 2:

Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee Forward Plan 2023-24**June 2023**

Item	Lead
Update from the shadow committee	Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Committee Chair and Annemarie Parker, Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Cared for Children and Care Leaver Scorecard Q4 and covering report	Annemarie Parker, Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers and Bev Harding, Business Intelligence Manager
Cared for Sufficiency Update	Annemarie Parker, Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee Annual Report	Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Committee Chair and Annemarie Parker, Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Engagement with frontline services from councillors	Annemarie Parker, Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers

September 2023

Item	Lead
Update from the shadow committee	Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Committee Chair and Annemarie Parker, Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Cared for Children and Care Leaver Scorecard Q1 and covering report	Annemarie Parker, Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers and Bev Harding, Business Intelligence Manager
Care Leavers Annual Report	Steve Nevitt, Service Manager for Care Leavers
IRO Annual Report	Head of Service Safeguarding
Children's Rights Annual Report	Sue Preston, Manager Children's Society

December 2023

Item	Lead
Update from the shadow committee	Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Committee Chair and Annemarie Parker, Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Cared for Children and Care Leaver Scorecard Q2 and covering report	Annemarie Parker, Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers and Bev Harding, Business Intelligence Manager
Virtual School Headteachers Annual Report	Laura Rogerson, Head of Service Inclusion
Adoption Annual Reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption Service • Adoption Panel 	Gail Spray, Head of Service Adoption Counts, and Nicola Booth, Service Manager Adoption Counts

March 2024

Item	Lead
Update from the shadow committee	Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Committee Chair and Annemarie Parker, Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Cared for Children and Care Leaver Scorecard Q3 and covering report	Annemarie Parker, Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers and Bev Harding, Business Intelligence Manager
Health of Cared for Children Annual Report and Mid Year Report	Sue Pilkington, Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children
Fostering Annual Reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fostering Service • Fostering Panel • Fostering recruitment update and plans for foster carer fortnight 	Shamena Sadiq, Service Manager Fostering
Review of Terms of Reference	