

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 10 January 2023

Report Title: Corporate Parenting Q2 score card 2022/23

Report of: Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services

Report Reference No:

Ward(s) Affected: All Wards

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1.** This report sets out the performance for corporate parenting for quarter 2 of 2022-23 (1 July 2022 – 30 September 2022). The Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to note the performance for quarter 2 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 2 performance for children and families services for the relevant indicators for the reporting year of 2022-23

3. Recommendations

- 3.1.** The Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to:
- 3.2** note the performance of children's services for quarter 2.
- 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 Corporate Parenting 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 2 of 2022-23 (1 July 2022 – 30 September 2022).

- 6.2.** The following indicators have been highlighted for consideration

7. Briefing information

- 7.1** Cheshire East Council were responsible for 540 cared for children at the end of quarter 2. 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** We have seen an increase in the number of children entering care from 132 in 2020/21 to 160 in 2021/22. Much of this increase relates to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) becoming cared for. 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 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 (21 September 2022) 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.

- 7.3** However, whilst positive we are ambitious to increase this rate and we are not making as much progress as we would like with discharging Care Orders. This is primarily due to staff shortages across the service and the need to prioritise our statutory work. We have recently commissioned a managed service that includes 6 social workers and a team manager. It is anticipated that this will bring some stability to the service for at least 6 months. At the time of writing this report, the cared for service has 12.5 permanent social work vacancies out of an establishment of 24. The managed service has improved capacity on a short-term basis and will ensure that we are able to meet statutory obligations. Work is being undertaken with HR colleagues to consider how we retain our existing workforce and how we recruit experienced social workers.
- 7.4** The timeliness of cared for children's reviews continues to be good and in Q2, this was at 93%. Additionally, 95% 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** Q2 data shows an increase in children placed with in-house foster carers (130 in Q2 compared to 123 in Q1). This is positive and there are plans in place to increase recruitment of foster carers, which will mean that we can place more of our children with Cheshire East foster carers. Generally, we want children to remain local and within Cheshire East where possible. For some children, they may live out of the area because they need a specialist placement, or they want to be close to birth family who have moved away. Arrangements for any child who lives at a distance are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure this remains appropriate.
- 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 Q1, the number of children living in residential care was 36, positively within Q2 we have seen a reduction to 32. 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%.
- 7.7** The number of adoptions continues to slowly increase with 9 children adopted so far this year and another 13 living in their adoption placements. Of the 9 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. For example, one was 1,207 days, which will have impacted our average number of days for the 9 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 commences employment in January 2023. It is anticipated that she will be able to provide some additional oversight of placement stability and that we can track children's placement moves more effectively to reduce unnecessary moves.
- 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 46% 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. 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.
- 7.11** The next NEET programme is currently underway and is being 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. Previous NEET programmes have seen real successes for our young people.
- 7.12** Whilst most health assessments are being requested within 48 hours of children entering care (66% in Q2) there has been a decline from 71% in Q1. This is likely to be an impact of significant staff shortages, particularly social workers across all service areas. This data will be discussed with health colleagues to see what is causing delay so we can truly understand the full picture and manage this to ensure that the timeliness of health assessments for children improves.

- 7.13** Q2 data shows an increase in children seeing a dentist to 44% from 37% in Q1. We are working to try and look at how we capture this data as we believe these figures are not a true representation. One of the things we are doing is adding in a mandatory question within the Statutory review process so that we have a better and more accurate picture of this information.
- 7.14** Q2 data shows that 95% 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.
- 7.15** 80% of care leavers have up-to-date pathway plans and % of care leavers had their plans reviewed within timescales. We are aware that there are issues in respect of pathway plans being reviewed and we are changing the way in which pathway plans are reviewed. This work will now transfer 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.

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 Q2
Background Papers:	None