

Cheshire East Council

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 2nd May 2017

Report of: Pete Lambert, Head of Cared for Children

Subject/Title: Corporate Parenting Update

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Liz Durham

1. Report Summary

1.1. This report provides an update to the Corporate Parenting Committee on national and local developments in relation to cared for children and young people and care leavers.

2. Recommendation

2.1. Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to:

2.1.1 Note the contents of the report;

2.1.2 Endorse the corporate parenting training for elected members set out at Appendix 1.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

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

4. Other Options Considered

4.1. None; this is an update report.

5. Background

National Developments

New Ofsted framework

5.1. A range of children's social care settings are subject to the same social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) from 1 April 2017. The following three principles ink all Ofsted's inspections of children's social care providers:

- to focus on the things that matter most to children's lives;
- to be consistent in our expectations of providers; and
- to prioritise our work where improvement is needed most.

5.2. Prior to April there were several variations in the inspection guidance for social care providers across the range of settings, and differences in the criteria used by Ofsted to make judgements on each type of service. The experiences and progress of children are central to the new SCCIF. The framework will support inspectors to focus on the difference the provider makes to the lives of children and other service users. The framework is tailored to reflect and address each distinct type of children's social care provider. These are:

- children's homes, including secure children's homes;
- independent fostering agencies;
- voluntary adoption agencies;
- residential family centres;
- residential holiday schemes for disabled children;
- boarding schools and residential special schools;
- the residential provision of further education colleges; and
- adoption support agencies.

Homeless Reduction Bill

5.3. The government has announced the planned introduction of a Homeless Reduction Bill for Autumn 2017. It is currently working its way through the Parliamentary process, but is expected to be passed. The Bill includes the following:

- An extension of the period during which Cheshire East should treat someone as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days.
- Clarification of the action Cheshire East should take when someone applies for assistance having been served with a valid section 21 notice of intention to seek possession from an assured shorthold tenancy.
- A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness.
- A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants.
- A new duty on public services to notify the Council if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

5.4. In terms of specific reference to care leavers, there is the provision that a local connection criteria will apply where a young homeless care leaver has a local connection to the area of the local authority that looked after them or, if it is different, the area where they normally live and have lived for at least 2 years including some time before they reached 16. This will make it easier

for them to get help in whichever of these areas they feel most at home (rather than the previous law where if they had no connection to a local area then the local authority would have no duty to provide accommodation).

Local Developments

Letter to Health from Chair of the Corporate Parenting Committee

- 5.5. Following the last Committee, the Chair has written to the Chief Executives of the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to seek assurance around performance on carrying out initial health assessments for cared for children within the statutory timescales.

Regional Adoption Agency

- 5.6. In quarter 4 final plans were completed for the launch of our Regional Adoption Agency, called Adoption Counts. This is a partnership with Stockport, Trafford, Salford and Manchester Councils, which will be one of the first new adoption agencies to open for business in July this year. The aim of 'Adoption Counts' will be to maximise the economies of scale and expertise so that more children are matched with adopters much sooner and locally within the geographical boundary of the agency. There will be a particular focus on placing more children for adoption who; have complex needs, are part of a sibling group, and are from black and ethnic minority backgrounds. Adopters and children will also benefit from a regional approach to post adoption support.

Signs of Safety

- 5.7. Cheshire East Children's Services will be implementing the 'Signs of Safety' approach as our way of working with children, young people and families in quarter 1 this year. 'Signs of Safety' is widely recognised internationally as the leading approach to casework. The project, along with 30 local authorities, was not successful in securing DfE Innovation funding. However, the council has agreed to fund the core aspects of the model which will ensure that 'Signs of Safety' is implemented and that Cheshire East continues to put children and young people first in everything we do.

Residential Homes re-design

- 5.8. The commissioning process for the redesign of the borough's residential homes for children in care was completed in quarter 4 and a contract was awarded to BetterCare Keys, a national children home provider, to run from 1 April 2017. The aim is to provide a more flexible range of children homes and to increase the capacity to care for more of our children within the borough. An update on the status of each home is as follows:
- **Claremont** – the transfer from a Council run home to Bettercare Keys was effectively managed and Bettercare Keys started operating the home from 1 April 2017 under the new contractual arrangements.

- **Victoria Lodge and Ivy Lane** – Together Trust (the existing provider) offered all the staff group at both homes opportunities to stay with the organisation and the vast majority decided to stay rather than TUPE to Bettercare Keys. Bettercare Keys are now in the process of establishing new staffing teams and Ofsted registration can only follow once a Registered Manager is appointed. In order to manage the transition, Together Trust have agreed to continue to run Ivy Lane for a further 3 months (1 April to 30th June 2017) and Victoria Lodge has been mothballed whilst a staff team is mobilised and Ofsted registration complete.
- **New home 1 & 2** – the properties for the two new two bed homes in Crewe have been sourced and ward members updated on their location. Bettercare Keys are currently recruiting new staff teams and planning Ofsted registration. The opening of the two new homes will be dependent on the speed of recruitment.

Head of Service, Cared for Children

- 5.9. The current Head of Service, Cared for Children is due to leave Cheshire East on 8th June. Recruitment is underway to fill the post and interim arrangements will be in place.

Adoption breakdowns and Foster Placement Disruptions

- 5.10. An operational Placement Stability Task and Finish Group was convened in January in order to consider what we need to learn from, amongst other areas, placement disruptions and breakdowns. A review of placement disruptions was completed in 2016 and key learning will feed into this workstream. This is a complex area of work with implications across the service. A review of the actions taken and progress made can be added to the future work plan of this committee.

The Cynget Programme

- 5.11. The Cynget Programme is a commissioned service to provide bespoke traineeships with enhanced 1:1 support. The tender process took place recently and the contract was awarded to Total People from March 2017. They will work with the Council to provide traineeships which are personalised and so more accessible to our young people not in education, employment and training (NEET). Sessions will be held at venues and times to match the young people's needs. The intention is that 10 young people are enrolled through this and supported to move onto apprenticeships or work.

Corporate Parenting Training

- 5.12. Further work has taken place around safeguarding and corporate parenting training, The proposed programme is set out at Appendix 1.

6. Wards Affected and Local Ward Members

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

7. Implications of Recommendation

7.1. Policy Implications

- 7.1.1. There are a number of policy implications as a result of local and national developments and these will be reported, as appropriate to the relevant Committee.

7.2. Legal Implications

- 7.2.1. The national and local developments described in this report are wide ranging and will in many particulars have legal implications. Legal advice will be sought, as appropriate, upon all relevant emerging issues.

7.3. Financial Implications

- 7.3.1. The Innovation Fund Bid to implement signs of safety has not been approved. This means that the Council will need to ensure that implementation of the programme will need to be completed withing a much reduced transition funding budget.

7.4. Human Resources Implications

- 7.4.1. The recruitment for a new of Head of Service for Cared for Children is currently underway.

7.5. Equality Implications

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

7.6. Rural Community Implications

- 7.6.1. None.

7.7. Public Health Implications

- 7.7.1. None identified at this stage.

8. Risk Management

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

9. Contact Information

Contact details for this report are as follows:-

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Proposed Programme – Child and Adult Safeguarding Training for Members

Suggested Content

3-3.5 hr session - Objective for the session – To raise awareness of what is meant by the term 'safeguarding' for both children and adults.

Aims:

- Promote the welfare of children and adults at risk;
- Raise awareness of the key risk factors of abuse and neglect and how to identify signs and symptoms of concern;
- Have an understanding of current legislation with regard to safeguarding children and adults at risk;
- Know what to do if there are concerns that a child or adult at risk is being abused and how to respond to disclosure;
- Have an understanding of what LADO is and what to do if they are concerned about the behaviour of someone in a position of trust;
- Have an awareness of the role of a council member in relation to safeguarding children and adults at risk;
- Who are our cared for children - understand the profile and needs of our cared for children, the challenges they face and current outcomes;
- Understand legislation with regard to cared for children;
- Elected members role as corporate parents;
- The role of the corporate parenting committee.

Suggested Timetable

	Date	Venue	Seats	Delivered By	Lead	Supported by	Cost
1	September 2017 9.30-12.30 13.00-16.00	Sandbach Sandbach	20 20	Commissioned Provider (with support from Heads of Service)	Workforce Development (with Di Moulson)	Content agreed with K Rose & S Murphy before C&F OSC	Indicative costs from potential commissioned provider - £675 per day. Dependent on venue availability also potential cost for venue hire & refreshments.
2	January 2018 9.30-12.30 13.00-16.00	Crewe Crewe	20 20	Commissioned Provider (with support from Heads of	As above	As above	As above

				Service)			
3	April 2018 9.30-12.30 13.00-16.00	Macclesfield Macclesfield	20 20	Commissioned Provider (with support from Heads of Service)	As above	As above	As above
4	Rolling programme thereafter offering a refresher update						

Additional Comments

- Dates to be agreed and schedule in advance and published and promoted from July 2017.
- Historically children's safeguarding training for Members has been funded and delivered internally by the Corporate Training Programme held by the Workforce Development Team.
- Serious Case Reviews to be used as case studies within the session.
- Same content used in rolling programme, with updates on statistics, legislation and SCRs taken into account each year.
- Agree training requirements with opposition leader and independents (KR & SM by 31/03/17)
- Develop content and schedule dates and venues (AR to lead in conjunction with KR & SM by 30/04/17)
- Content to be agreed by C&F OSC (KR by 30/05/17)
- Content to be agreed by MP & Cllr J Clowes – then Health Social Care OSC (SM to lead by 30/05/2017)
- Content to be agreed by Corporate Parenting Board Committee (PL to lead by 30/06/2017)
- Ensure content is consistent with LSC/AB expectations (WFD/LSCB/LSAB by 31/07/17)
- Delivery commences, supported by Workforce Development where required – (Sept 2017)