

Cheshire East Council

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 4th July 2017

Report of: Anji Reynolds, Service Manager, Permanence and Through Care Team
Amanda Greenwood, The Children's Society
Sue Preston, The Children's Society

Subject/Title: Children and Young People's Participation

Portfolio Holder: Cllr George Hayes

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report provides information to the committee on cared for children and young people's participation.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to:
 - 2.1.1 Note the contents of this report;
 - 2.1.2 Scrutinise the current provision and outcomes for cared for children and care leavers in relation to participation.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. As an advisory Committee to Cabinet, it is important that Corporate Parenting Committee has a comprehensive overview of how our cared for children and young people can have a say in services that affect them.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. Not applicable.

5. Background

- 5.1. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ratified by the UK Government in 1991, was the first piece of international legislation to acknowledge that children are subjects of rights rather than merely recipients of protection. Article 12 of the Convention states that:

- Children and young have the right to express his or her views freely – about everything that affects him or her.
 - The child or young person's views must be given 'due weight' depending on his or her age and maturity.
 - The child or young person has the right to be heard in all decision-making processes, including in court hearings. The child or young person can speak for him or herself, or someone else can speak for him or her.
- 5.2. Subsequent legislation such as Children Act 1989, 2004, Health and Social Care Act 2012, Children and Families Act 2014 etc have all reiterated this commitment to children and young people's participation.
- 5.3. The Children's Society is currently commissioned by Cheshire East to provide a Children's Rights and Participation Service and they work with services within the Council and partner agencies to provide the following services:
- Advocacy and Independent Visitor services
 - Participation with children and young people

Advocacy and Independent Visitor Services

- 5.4. The Advocacy Service assists children and young people in resolving their concerns and complaints, and provides a service that can give information, advice, advocacy, representation and support. An Advocate can help by:
- Going to a meeting with the child or young person
 - Making a phone call for the child or young person
 - Helping the child or young person to write a letter or writing a letter with them
 - Helping the child or young person to send or write email
 - Speaking for them
 - Listening to the child or young person and passing on their concerns to others
 - Speaking for the child or young person about their worries or particular problem.
- 5.5. The Independent Visitor Service provides children in care with a trusted adult to visit, advise and befriend them when it is considered to be in their best interests. Volunteers are recruited and trained to spend time with a young person in care doing fun activities, depending on the needs of the young person.
- 5.6. The Children's Society Annual Report on the Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service is attached at Appendix 2.

Participation with Children and Young People

- 5.7. The overall services priorities around participation for 2017-18 are attached at Appendix 2. These include participation with cared for children and young people.
- 5.8. There are a range of ways in which children and young people are engaged in decisions which affect them. More detail on these areas is included at Appendix 3.

6. Contact Information

6.1. Contact details for this report are as follows:-

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