

## **Corporate Parenting Committee**

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**Date of Meeting:** 09 May 2018

**Report Title:** Corporate Parenting Update

**Portfolio Holder:** Jos Saunders Portfolio Holder for children and Families

**Senior Officer:** Kerry Birtles, Head of Cared for Children & Care Leavers

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### **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/s**

- 2.1. Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to:
- 2.1.1. Note the contents of the report.
  - 2.1.2. Comment on any ideas to promote the recruitment of Independent Visitors as set out in para 5.16.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendation/s**

- 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**

##### Extended Personal Adviser duty Implementation Grant (New Burdens)

- 5.1 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced a new duty on local authorities, requiring them to offer Personal Adviser support to all care leavers up to age 25. This duty came into force on 1 April 2018. The Department for Education (DfE) has issued each local authority with a grant to help meet the

requirements of this duty, in response to young people that may request such support from the local authority after the age of 21 and up to their 25th birthday. Cheshire East has been allocated £13,911. This can be spent on supporting the costs associated with meeting this duty, taking account of the statutory guidance Extending Personal Adviser support to all care leavers to age 25 published on 26 February 2018.

#### DfE commissioned foster care review

- 5.2 A review of the fostering system in England makes 36 recommendations to the Government about how the outcomes of children in foster care can be improved. Foster Care in England: A Review for the Department for Education by Sir Martin Narey and Mark Owers was published on 6 February 2018. It is an independent report following a closed public consultation seeking views on the current state of the fostering system in England and how to improve the prospects of children in fostering care. The recommendations for Government, local authorities and other care partners include:
- ensuring that foster carers are supported and included in decision-making;
  - improving foster placement commissioning and matching; and
  - greater stability and permanence for children and young people in foster care.
- 5.3 The Government will respond to the report and the recommendations in Spring 2018, setting out the future programme of work for the fostering system.

### **Local Developments**

#### Update on Development of the Corporate Parenting Strategy

- 5.4 Work continues to develop the priorities and content of the new corporate parenting strategy. This has included engagement with young people and frontline staff and managers. A session for senior managers is planned in May. It is expected that the new strategy will be signed off by Committee in September.

#### Local Area SEND Inspection

- 5.5 Between 12th-16th March 2018, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) carried out an Inspection of Cheshire East's multi-agency effectiveness in identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). Inspectors spent the majority of the time in a wide variety of professional focus groups each looking at SEND Provision. 60 focus group meetings were held, involving over 220 staff. They also held 3 parent/carers workshops, which attracted 140 participants. Inspectors also reviewed a number of children's case files. A

letter from Inspectors setting out the local area's strengths and areas for development will be published in early May.

#### Approval for new special school in Crewe

- 5.6 On 29th March 2018 the Secretary of State announced approval of the Cheshire East bid to establish a new Special Free School in Crewe for children aged 4 - 16 with Social Emotional and Mental Health needs. The timeline for the opening of the new school is yet to be finalised and the Council is pushing for the earliest possible date (September 2019), however this is a challenging deadline. The school will be called the Axis Academy and will be run by East Cheshire Youth Achievement Free School Trust who currently run Fermain Academy in Macclesfield. This is a fantastic opportunity to increase the number of local special school places and may help placing cared for children locally as sometimes the travel to school is a barrier to achieving a local placement. The new Special Free School will focus on mental health and it is envisaged that a multi-disciplinary team will be based at the school delivering outreach across the community.

#### Voice for Children Contract

- 5.7 The contract for Voice for Children, the company originally established by two care leavers from Cheshire East, has been extended for a further year. A reduction to the value of the contract has been applied from 1st April 2018 and the specification has been adjusted to reflect this. The main change to the specification has been to reduce the mentoring offer as this part of the specification encountered difficulties in 2017-18 and is already available through another company, Pure Insights. The mentoring offer remains within the specification but is now focused on supporting a small number of young people that are experiencing difficulties in debt, drugs and offending that are having an impact on housing applications. It is hoped that targeting mentoring in this way will provide re-assurance to housing providers and this change has been input to the consultation on the Vulnerable Persons Housing Strategy.

#### Re-commission of supported lodgings

- 5.8 The re-commission of supported lodgings services is complete and the contract from 1st April 2018 was awarded to Forum Housing again. Their bid was good and built on the service delivery to date that has developed well through Forum Housing's attendance at the Ignition Panel and listening to young people's views re their aspirations and planning towards independence. The new service builds in the ability for our more complex young people to possibly access a supported lodging.

#### Cared for Children and Care Leavers Service

- 5.9 From April 2018, the Council's Permanence and Throughcare Team will be known as the 'Cared For Children & Care Leavers Service'. This change was prompted by feedback from young people and their families and other

professionals that the previous name didn't adequately describe what the team does.

#### Family Nurse Partnership

- 5.10 The Family Nurse Partnership helps local young parents to increase their confidence and gives them the guidance and support they need to give their baby the best start in life. Young parents are paired with a specially trained family nurse who visits them regularly, from the early stages of pregnancy until their child is two. The offer has been extended to first time pregnant vulnerable young people in care/care leavers up to the age of 24 (it was previously age 19).

#### Changes to Pupil Premium Plus

- 5.11 From April 2017, the method used to allocate funding for cared for children was amended to a 'needs led' model where schools can request the amount needed to carry out the support and interventions which have been identified as necessary. This change was made because the needs of children vary considerably. Over recent years the amount allocated for each child has increased, as has the requirement for Virtual School Heads to ensure that this is used to maximum effectiveness to benefit these children and for schools to make clear through the PEP how this money will be used and its impact monitored. The amount paid to the council to be allocated by the Virtual School Head has increased in 2018-19 to £2,300 per child in care who is in Reception to Year 11. Guidance on the allocation method for 2018-19 will be issued to schools shortly.

#### School places for children looked after by other local authorities

- 5.12 Local authorities have a statutory duty under *The Children Act 1989* to promote the educational achievement of looked after children, including those placed out of authority. Children in care are a vulnerable group and so are given the highest priority when seeking places, including those from other local authorities. As a corporate parent, Cheshire East local authority will seek to ensure that all cared for children have access to the best possible education which meets their needs and that, when new places are required, these are found with as little delay as possible. This means that all staff involved need to be aware of the process, their responsibilities and options available. A document has been produced that sets out the steps for admission of a cared for child and also information about school registration. The School Admissions Team or Virtual School of the Council will issue the guidance paper, '*School Places in Cheshire East for children looked after by other local authorities*', as soon as they are aware of a request for a place.

#### Participation with Children and Young People

- 5.13 The Participation Team have been making links and engaging with Crewe YMCA, Pure Insight, Voice for Children, the Cared for and Care Leaver Team

and Watermill House (P3) to develop a Care Leaver Council/Care Leaver Voice group. The team will be working with these groups to find out what is going well, what could be developed and ideas to make things better around the following priority areas:

- Better prepared and supported to live independently
  - Improved access to education, employment and training
  - Experiencing stability
  - Feeling safe and secure
  - Improved access to health and support and achieving financial stability.
- 5.14 To date consultations have taken place with young people around improved access to education, employment and training opportunities. Young people were positive about their relationships with some Personal Advisors and Senior Young Person's Advisors (PAs), however they feel that there is not enough feedback/support from Social Workers and potential employers when doing taster days. Also when living in the YMCA there is less incentive to get into employment because this impacts on rent benefits, making it difficult to achieve sustainability. Young people would like to see employability hubs/training and longer drop in sessions with Senior Young Person's Advisors.
- 5.15 The service is responding to the issues raised by care leavers, including exploring ways in which the relationships between PAs and care leavers can be strengthened. In terms of incentives to get into employment, the service offers 'top-up' funding to ensure that the young person is no worse off than if they were on benefits. A meeting has been arranged with the individual who raised the issue to ensure that they are supported to access this fund. One of the immediate actions taken in response to care leaver feedback is that when visiting care leavers, PAs no longer take paper and record during the meeting as care leavers did not like this approach. The bigger challenges in relation to employment, housing and health are being tackled within our new corporate parenting strategy (participation with children and young people runs as a theme throughout the new strategy). The new facebook account (detailed below) is a further example of how the team are working and thinking differently about different ways to engage children and young people.

#### Cheshire East Care Leavers Facebook Account

- 5.16 A new Cheshire East Care Leavers Facebook account went live on the 1st March 2018. This is primarily for announcements, new events coming up and anything significant that the service wishes to relay to Cheshire East Care Leavers. It is hoped that this can reach a greater audience to raise awareness around apprenticeship offers, Job fairs and anything else of significance. This is managed by the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Service on a daily basis and is for posting information out to care leavers.

### Independent Visitors Needed

5.17 Cheshire East commissions The Children's Society to run an Independent Visitor (IV) Service for children in care who are the responsibility of the Local Authority. IVs befriend and support children and young people aged up to 18 years. IVs are recruited and trained to spend time with a young person, doing fun activities depending on the needs of the young person. The Children's Society is looking to recruit additional IVs who have the following skills and abilities:

- Are over the age of 18
- Some experience of children and young people would be useful
- The ability to relate appropriately to a young person
- Non-judgemental and open minded
- Ability to write up visits
- Understand the term 'confidentiality' and when it is necessary to break this
- Not be an elected member of the local council or work for Children's Social Care

## **6. Implications of the Recommendations**

### **6.1. Legal Implications**

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.

### **6.2. Finance Implications**

There are no direct financial implications of this report.

### **6.3. Equality Implications**

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

### **6.4. Human Resources Implications**

There are no direct financial implications of this report

### **6.5. Risk Management Implications**

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.

### **6.6. Rural Communities Implications**

None.

### **6.7. Implications for Children & Young People**

6.7.1. The contents of this report has implications for cared for children and care leavers, who are some of Cheshire East's most vulnerable children.

## **6.8. Public Health Implications**

6.8.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

## **7. Ward Members Affected**

7.1. 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.

## **8. Consultation & Engagement**

8.1. None.

## **9. Access to Information**

9.1. None.

## **10. Contact Information**

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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