

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

## REPORT TO: Cabinet

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**Date of Meeting:** 11 May 2010  
**Report of:** Strategic Director People  
**Subject/Title:** The Pledge to Cheshire East Cared for Children

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### 1.0 Report Summary

1.1 All local authorities are required to make a pledge to Cared for Children. The Cheshire East Children in Care Council have considered what they would wish to be included within 'The Pledge'. This report contains recommendations to meet the requirements of Care Matters.

1.2 On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010, the Corporate Parenting Board resolved the following:

- To adopt the Children in Care Council recommendations as the Cheshire East Council Pledge to Cared for Children.
- Recommend to Cabinet that the Pledge be adopted.

### 2.0 Recommendations

The Cabinet is recommended to decide:

2.1 That the Pledge recommended by the Children in Care Council be adopted as the Pledge to Children who are cared for by Cheshire East Council.

### 3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The recommendation will enable the Local Authority to meet its duty to Cared for Children

### 4.0 Wards Affected

4.1 All

### 5.0 Local Ward Members

5.1 All

### 6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change - Health

6.1 Policy and procedures are to be reviewed to ensure compliance with the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and Care Matters.

**7.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)**

7.1 None

**8.0 Financial Implications 2010/11 and beyond (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)**

8.1 The Council believes that its budget for 2010/11 does appropriately reflect the range of issues which are highlighted in this Pledge.

**9.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)**

9.1 In June 2007, the white paper "Care Matters: Time for Change" was published. It sets out a very clear expectation that every local authority is to develop a pledge for the children in care in their area. The local authority should ensure that:

- children are aware of the basic statutory requirements which the local authority should already be complying with
- children are aware of the of the key opportunities and benefits offered to them locally
- children in care are supported to engage with positive activities as much as possible
- children in care have been consulted and involved in developing the pledge, including those with special needs and disabled children
- the pledge is regularly reviewed and reflected in the local Children and Young People's Plan or equivalent.

9.2 The main legislation in respect of the pledge is the Children and Young Persons Act 2008, which underpins the Care Matters: Time for Change white paper. The main provisions of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 aim to:

- ensure that the child's voice is heard
- ensure stability for children by ensuring that they are in the most appropriate placement
- provide more support for care leavers.

9.3 Basic statutory requirements that a local authority should be complying with in respect of children in care have been included in the pledge in plain, simple English that should be easily understood by children and young people.

**10.0 Risk Management**

10.1 Failure to adopt a pledge to Cared for Children will result in the authority failing to meet the requirements of Care Matters. The pledge is considered

by Ofsted in their inspection of services to Cared for Children and failure to make a pledge could result in the service being deemed unsatisfactory.

## **11.0 Background and Options**

- 11.1 The Care Matters White Paper, issued in 2007, set out an ambitious programme of change to improve the outcomes of children in care. Care Matters set out a vision to ensure that in the future children in care would have the same opportunities in life as their peers – a good education, good health care, and consistent support, advice and practical help to give them strong foundations on which they can build happy and successful lives.
- 11.2 As a part of the implementation of Care Matters, the Government requires all local authorities to develop a **pledge for children in care**, which will set out those things that all children in their care will receive.
- 11.3 Better outcomes for children in and leaving care often come about when they are empowered to act positively and effect change in their own lives. The Pledge should be developed as a key communication tool in partnership with children and young people. Crucial to the success of the Pledge is that it reflects the perception of children and young people about the parenting they need. Every child and young person's care or pathway plan must reflect how the commitments made in the Pledge will be delivered for that individual child.
- 11.4 The Government believe that there will be some things which should be at the core of the pledge offered by every local authority which might include:
- A choice, made with their social worker, of high quality placements;
  - 24/7 support from their social worker or an out of hours contact;
  - A minimum entitlement to sport and leisure activities – for example, 4 hours a week;
  - A chance to take part in volunteering;
  - Twice yearly health assessments for under 5's and annual health assessments and twice yearly dental checkups for older children;
  - An independent advocate;
  - The choice of when to move on to enter adult life, up to the age of 18; and
  - The right to have their voice heard and influence the work of the local authority through participation in a 'Children in Care Council'.
- 11.5 In accordance with requirements of Care Matters, Cheshire East has an established Child in Care Council. This council have considered what it is that they would wish to have included in the pledge (Appendix 1).

- 11.6 The Corporate Parenting Board is the vehicle for ensuring the Council is doing all it can to improve outcomes for our Cared for Children. The Corporate Parenting Board has considered the content of the pledge as described by the Children in Care Council and is recommending its adoption.
- 11.7 On acceptance of the recommendation, the Pledge will be drafted into an appropriate format to reflect the Councils commitment to children and young people, including an expectation that in response to a consistency of provision and support, children and young people will endeavour to maximise the opportunities provided to them.

## **12.0 Overview of Year One and Term One Issues**

- 12.1 Not applicable

## **13.0 *Access to Information***

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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