

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Committee**
held on Tuesday, 13th November, 2018 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor J Saunders (Chairman)
Councillor D Flude (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors P Butterill, S Gardiner, G Hayes, G Merry and M Warren

Officers in attendance

Nicola Axford, Attendance and Pupils out of School
Gill Betton, Head of Service: Children's Development and Partnerships
Kerry Birtles, Head of Service: Cared for Children & Care Leavers
Shelley Lewis, Independent Fostering Panel Chair
Keith Martin, Head of Service: Cared for Children & Care Leavers
Nigel Moorhouse, Director of Children's Social Care
Mark Palethorpe, Acting Executive Director of People
Laura Rogerson, Headteacher, Virtual School for Cared for Children
Claire Williamson, Head of Service: Education Participation & Pupil Support
Julie Zientek, Democratic Services Officer

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Durham, M Grant and O Hunter.

19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

20 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2018 be approved as a correct record, subject to an amendment to add apologies for absence from Councillor M Warren.

21 CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE FROM ELECTED MEMBERS

Committee Members reported the following:

Councillor J Saunders had attended a meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Group, which had focussed on the health of unaccompanied assylum-seeking children.

Councillor D Flude had had a very positive meeting with Mark Riddell, the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers, and had read his follow-up letter with interest. Councillor Flude also stated that she was a safeguarding governor, with an interest in looked after children in her schools.

Councillor G Merry stated that the Being a Good Corporate Parent Workstream had considered options for engagement with cared for children and young people other than in formal meetings, including getting together with tea and cakes before meetings. The Head of Cared for Children and Care Leavers confirmed that suggestions had been taken to the shadow committee and that the Pledges to Cared for Children and Care Leavers would be considered by Council at its meeting in December.

Following his visit to the Crewe Child Protection Team with Councillor S Edgar the previous day, Councillor G Hayes stated that they enjoyed the Signs of Safety framework but had concerns regarding caseload and case complexity reporting.

Kerry Birtles, Head of Cared for Children and Care Leavers, reported that approximately 50% of Corporate Parenting Committee Members had DBS checks. It was hoped to have the frontline visits up and running as soon as possible, to enable Members to gather knowledge. From May 2019, it would be mandatory for Members of the Committee to have a DBS check.

22 INPUT FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Kerry Birtles, Head of Cared for Children and Care Leavers reported that she had spoken to two young people, who had mixed views. They wanted to attend the formal committee meetings and also participate in informal activities with Members and officers, including meals out, kayaking, crazy golf and trips to the zoo.

She also stated that children were intending to send their own invitations to Members for the forthcoming STAR Awards event.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

23 UPDATE ON THE ATTACHMENT AWARE PROJECT

Nicola Axford, Attendance and Pupils out of School, gave an update on the Attachment Aware Project, which helped schools to support pupils with attachment difficulties.

Ten schools had taken part in the project, which included staff training, safe spaces and teaching children about their own emotional behaviour. Following the project, a positive impact had been reported, with pupils being calm and settled in schools.

Next steps included a repeat next year with a second group and consideration of a Cheshire East multi-team strategy for attachment awareness.

In response to questions from Committee members, it was confirmed that training had been carried out in other schools and that information would also be on the website. In addition, the attachment work would feed into a behaviour strategy which would be rolled out to all schools. It was not an expensive intervention but it was more difficult for smaller schools, where the headteacher also taught.

RESOLVED - That the update be noted.

24 VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR CARED FOR CHILDREN HEADTEACHER'S ANNUAL REPORT

Laura Rogerson, Headteacher, Virtual School for Cared for Children, gave a presentation to the Committee on the Virtual School for Cared for Children Head teacher's Annual Report for 2018.

The Virtual School had continued to support all cared for children. While the overall number of children had continued to rise, a high number were achieving in school. In the last 12 months, attendance had improved, exclusions remained low, and the quality and completion rate of Personal Education Plans had risen to over 90%.

Areas of need included maths, supporting a higher number of children out of area, improving Key Stage 4 outcomes, and emotional and mental health.

Priorities for 2018 - 2019 included continuing to provide support and interventions for schools and children, ePEPs, and the introduction of an SEN lead within Virtual School team.

In response to points raised by Committee Members it was reported that:

The support provided to pupils out of area included advisors visiting schools and keeping track of attainment, and training for schools. Bespoke packages such as online learning were also being considered.

There was no deputy headteacher but the leads were confident and supported the headteacher.

Primary and secondary school headteachers were to be invited to encourage participation at training events.

Ms Rogerson was thanked for the support the Virtual School has provided and for the very informative report.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

25 NATIONAL ADVISER FOLLOW UP LETTER TO CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

The Committee considered the contents of a letter outlining the findings of Mark Riddell, the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers, who had conducted a follow-up visit to Cheshire East on 15 October.

RESOLVED – That the letter be noted.

26 CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY 2018-20

The Committee considered the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018-20.

It was intended that the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy would improve the experiences and outcomes for all Cheshire East cared for children and care leavers. The strategy set out the following pledges:

1. We will be a good corporate parent
2. We will improve education, employment and training outcomes
3. We will work to achieve permanence and keep children safe
4. We will improve health and wellbeing outcomes
5. We will prepare young people for adulthood

The Corporate Parenting Committee ensured that the Council effectively discharged its role as Corporate Parent for all children and young people in care and care leavers from 0 - 25 years of age, in addition to holding partners to account for the discharge of their responsibilities. The Committee scrutinised performance reporting and impact, along with issues and risks, and prepared an Annual Report for consideration by Cabinet and the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Five Workstream Groups, aligned to the five pledge areas, ensured that the strategy was delivered effectively. The Chairman of each Workstream Group attended the Corporate Parenting Strategy Group, which had an overview across the workstreams to ensure any risks and issues were identified and that overall progress was being made in achieving the strategy outcomes.

An action plan had been drawn up, setting out the key actions for the achievement of the outcomes and pledges within the strategy.

Various sources would be used to ascertain what was working well and where action was need to achieve change, including talking to cared for children and care leavers, a corporate parenting scorecard, and feedback from children, young people, parents and carers, families and practitioners.

RESOLVED – That the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018-20 be noted.

27 CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received an update on national and local developments in relation to cared for children and young people and care leavers.

The update report had been amended to align with the priorities of the new Corporate Parenting Strategy and included the 'youth-proofed' pledges.

A resume of the following was given:

Ofsted Focussed Visit – October 2018
Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018-20 and Youth Proofed Pledges
Member Training
Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers - Maternity Leave
Virtual Headteacher Annual Report 2018
Ignition Panel
Decision-Making and Mental Capacity: NICE Guideline
Mental Health Assessments for Cared for Children Pilot
Visit from the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers
Care Leaver Covenant
Local Offer for Care Leavers

Members expressed their best wishes to Kerry Birtles, Head of Cared for Children and Care Leavers, who would be on maternity leave from the end of November, and to Nigel Moorhouse, Director of Children's Social Care, who was about to retire.

RESOLVED - That the update be noted.

28 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED - That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items pursuant to Section 100(A) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

29 FOSTERING PANEL ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

The Committee considered the Annual Report of the Fostering Panel, presented by its Independent Chair. Members had the opportunity of asking questions on any points of interest or clarification.

RESOLVED - That the report and its conclusions be noted.

30 FEEDBACK FROM OFSTED'S FOCUSSED VISIT IN OCTOBER 2018

Nigel Moorhouse, Director of Children's Social Care, gave a presentation on the findings of the 'focused visit' of Cheshire East's children's social care services which had taken place on 30 and 31 October 2018.

The focus for the visit had been the experiences of children cared for by Cheshire East, especially those who were living at home on care orders and children in residential provision. Inspectors had also looked at planning for permanence.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and concluded at 6.10 pm

Councillor J Saunders (Chairman)