

DECISION REPORT

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 17 March 2020

Report Title: Corporate Parenting Update Report and Scorecard

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

Senior Officer: Mark Palethorpe, Executive Director of People

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. To note the contents of the report. To provide support and challenge the local authority actions in respect of the report.

3. Reasons for Recommendation/s

3.1. The Corporate Parenting Committee is an 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 needs 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

- 5.1. This update report aligns with the pledges of the Corporate Parenting Strategy. The Strategy is being reviewed by the service to reflect subtle changes in officer and member leadership and to specifically evaluate the achievements to date and outline actions for the future.

6. Pledge 1 - Being a Good Corporate Parent

Business as Usual

- 6.1. It has been agreed at the Corporate Parenting Operational Group that 'Being a Good Corporate Parent' is a priority for all officers in any part of the service. As the Corporate Parenting Strategy has been in place since 2018 and subgroups are well embedded, there will no longer be a separate meeting with a singular focus on this. Rather each subgroup, in other forums, will drive actions relating to their priority and the impact to the objective of 'Being A Good Corporate Parent'.
- 6.2. Officers have been keen for several years to strengthen the connections between Elected Members and Cared For Children and Care Leavers and so make you aware that planning for our annual celebration event is underway. Consultation with children and young people and feedback from the 2019 event is forming these arrangements. Any support that could be offered from members in the planning or implementation of this would further strengthen relationships.

7. Pledge 2 – We will improve education, employment and employment outcomes.

- 7.1. As Corporate Parents we continue to be ambitious around achieving the very best outcomes for children and young people in relation to their education, training and employment. At the end of 2019 the Care Leavers Service and the Virtual School ran a 12 week NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) programme whereby Care Leavers supported a homelessness project with a personal goal of re-engaging in education. From a total of 12 young people, nine successfully completed the course and have remained engaged in education.
- 7.2. The Care Leavers Service will be strengthened further within the next 12 months by the resources allocated from the Journey First project. This will see additional keyworker capacity to work with our most vulnerable Care Leavers in being creative in re-engaging them in education, training and employment. The funding will be available over

a three year period which will offer consistency in relationships, a key driver for Care Leavers.

- 7.3. A new Deputy Head has been appointed to support Virtual Head Laura Rodgerson in the delivery of statutory functions to cared for children and previously cared for children, as Lauras role has developed and is now responsible for SEND service.

8. Pledge 3 - Achieving Permanence and Keeping Children Safe Being a Good Corporate Parent

Placement Stability

- 8.1. The Cared for Children Team and the Safeguarding Unit facilitate monthly joint performance challenge sessions whereby retrospective analysis of unplanned placement changes are scrutinised. The information gathered from these sessions forms part of the feedback that shapes projects such as the recommission of the 16+ accommodation offer. Placement stability is one of the focus areas within the service, this focus was validated during the last Ofsted inspection as a positive area.

Bespoke Childrens' Homes

- 8.2. Committee will be aware of the plans in place to mobilise and deliver four children's residential homes in Cheshire East. I am pleased to share that two of our homes are now Ofsted registered and have three young people living there, with a mobilisation subgroup that is aspirational and has plans to care for some of our most complex children.
- 8.3. All four homes are planned to be operational by May 2020 (subject to Ofsted registration) and these will house 14 places for Cheshire East children to reside in their home communities and receive the very best care to achieve their personal goals.

Fostering – Mockingbird

- 8.4. The implementation of our Mockingbird constellations is well underway in consultation with the Fostering Network. The Head of Service for Fostering, Keith Martin, and the Director of Childrens Social Care, Jacque Sims, have been engaging with foster carers within recent months in order to continue to take the service forward, and part of this exploration has identified that there are some carers in Cheshire East who provide similar support to that identified within the Mockingbird

model. This gives reassurance that there is work to build upon and an evidence base of its benefits.

- 8.5. The Fostering Service has also commissioned an independent review of the service, which has made some recommendations about how an alternative delivery structure may assist with recruitment and retention of foster carers, a key objective within the post Ofsted Action Plan. A key decision has been reached to depart from our collaborative relationship with Foster4 and to engage on our own recruitment and assessment processes to recruit new foster carers to Cheshire East.

Foster Care Fortnight

- 8.6. Foster Care Fortnight 2020 will take place from 11-24 May. Foster Care Fortnight is the UK's biggest foster care awareness raising campaign, delivered by leading fostering charity, The Fostering Network. Established for almost 20 years, the campaign showcases the commitment, passion and dedication of foster carers. Plans to celebrate Foster Care Fortnight in Cheshire East are currently under way and will be reported to the next Committee.

9. Pledge 4 – We will Improve Health and Wellbeing Outcomes

- 9.1. The Health Annual Report was delivered to Committee in January 2020. The group have not met again in person due to some sickness in the health service, however the objectives outlined within the Strategy continue to be operationally prioritised such as Initial Health Assessments (IHAs), Review Health Assessments (RHAs) and dental checks.
- 9.2. Work is underway as part of the review of the Local Offer for Care Leavers to strengthen the Health Passport for Care Leavers to make this a more meaningful and accessible piece of their history.

10. Pledge 5 – We will prepare young people for Adulthood

- 10.1. The Care Leavers Service are currently undertaking an in-service review of the Local Offer for Care Leavers, in consultation with Care Leavers. We are planning on inviting the Ambassador for Care Leavers, Mark Riddell, back to Cheshire East to support with this transition.
- 10.2. In supporting Care Leavers in their transition for independence, and following Ofsted feedback, we are reviewing what emergency accommodation looks like for our Care Leavers. The Head Of Service

has been to visit the YMCA and Roe Street, where our emergency accommodation is provided, in order to take measures to ensure that, if in the event that a Care Leaver is required to access emergency accommodation, that a tailored approach is provided.

11. Corporate Parenting Scorecard – Quarter 3

P3.1 . Number fo children placed in internal foster care

11.1. There continue to be challenges in relation to sufficiency within internal fostering provision. An independent review of the fostering service evidenced the decision for Cheshire East to leave our collaborative relationship with Foster4 and to begin our own journey of recruitment and assessment of foster carers.

P3.2. Number of children placed in external foster care

11.2. The consequence of lack of provision internally results in a reliance on the independent fostering market. It is planned that sufficiency will improve inhouse and therefore less reliance on independent placements.

P3.5. % of children with a permanency plan endorsed at the second statutory review

11.3. Child in Need and Child protecion services continue to experience challenges in relation to achieving a plan that can be endorsed within the timescales of the second statutory review. There is a clear plan to manage this through tracking and management oversight to ensure that this can be achieved for children.

P3.17. average number of days between PO and match with adoptive family (A2)

11.4. Our timliness in relation to adoption continues to be above the national average. Our children are tracked monthly by both adoption counts and the service and it is a success measure that we have been able to place children with permanent families who have complex health and educational needs. The result for timliness is detrimnetal however the outcomes for those children a success.

P4.1. % of Initial Health Assessments requested within 48 hours

11.5. There conintues to be challenges in relation to the requests for IHAs within 48 hours. These issues are well understood and it not a problem created by the process. The services are clear that this is a priority area for improvement.

P4.2. % of IHA completed by paediatrician within 20 days of coming into care

11.6. The process of completing the IHA by health colleagues is clear however there can be challenges because of practicalities, contact etc. This is understood from the service that this is a priority area.

12. National or legislative changes

12.1. The National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum have developed, in consultation with Care Leavers, a Local Offer Auditing Tool which invites care leaving services to review their local offers against the best practice developments in other local authorities. The care leaving service are currently reviewing the local offer in consultation with Care Leavers and partners in order to publish an updated Local Offer in Cheshire East. This activity may well generate new requests from the Local Authority to further prioritise Care Leavers in services such as jobs in the family business etc.

12.2. Cheshire East are keen to highlight the positive practice from some of our unique and tenacious staff and foster carers. We have selected a number of individuals for nominations at the National Children and Young People Awards, which will take place in June 2020.

13. Implications of the Recommendations

13.1. Legal Implications

12.1.1 There are no legal implications as a result of this report recommendation.

13.2. Financial Implications

12.2.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this recommendations of this report.

13.3. Equality Implications

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

13.4. Human Resources Implications

12.4.1 There are no direct human resource implications of this report.

13.5. Risk Management Implications

12.5.1 Cared For Children and Care Leavers are a vulnerable group that are at risk of a number of factors, including poor education and training, health, safeguarding and transition into adulthood; the Corporate Parenting Strategy prioritises these areas.

13.6. Rural Communities Implications

12.6.1 There are no direct rural communities' implications of this report.

13.7. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

12.7.1 The contents of this report have implications for Cared For Children and Care Leavers, who are some of Cheshire East's most vulnerable children.

13.8. Public Health Implications

12.8.1 There are no direct implications for public health.

13.9. Climate Change Implications

12.9.1 There is a commitment to ensure that Cheshire East Cared For Children live as close to their home community as possible, wherever this is safe to do so. This will ensure that children can continue to feel connected to their families and local community. It also reduces the geographical footprint of children, families and staff as travel is reduced.

13. Ward Members Affected

13.1. 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.

14. Consultation & Engagement

14.1. Cared For Children and Care Leavers continue to meet as My Voice to inform Corporate Parenting issues. Specifically there is a focus on feedback and engagement with Care Leavers in addressing matters such as emergency accommodation and the recommission of the 16+ accommodation for Care Leavers.

15. Access to Information

15.1. None.

16. Contact Information

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

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