

## **BRIEFING REPORT**

### **Corporate Parenting Committee**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	15 March 2022
<b>Report Title:</b>	Corporate Parenting Performance Report – Quarter 3 (2021-22)
<b>Report of:</b>	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children’s Services

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#### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1.** This report sets out the performance for corporate parenting for quarter 3 of 2021-22 (1 October – 31 December 2021). The Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to note the performance for quarter 3 and to provide support and challenge in relation to performance for children and young people.

#### **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1.** This report sets out the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on performance, and the arrangements that have been in place during this time and gives an overview of performance across the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Service for quarter 3 of 2021-22.
- 2.2.** The directorate has taken on board the feedback from committee with regards to adding in comparator and trend data where available. The scorecard is being reviewed and will be presented in Q4 addressing these comments.

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1.** Some ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic still remain. Delivery of frontline services, especially in terms of face to face visiting and routine reviews, have been adapted to reflect the various isolation requirements to protect both workers and the families we work with.
- 3.2.** Senior leaders and managers continue to remain sighted on service performance and impact on children and young people through weekly

scrutiny of our performance data and performance meetings within the service.

#### **4. Briefing Information**

- 4.1.** Cheshire East Council were responsible for 528 cared for children at the end of quarter 3. The cared for children population changes on a daily basis as children enter and leave care. Children cease to be cared for due to a number of reasons, these include turning 18, returning to their birth family, adoption and special guardianship. The latest comparable data we have across the region is for quarter 2, where Cheshire East's rate was the lowest across the North West at around 66.5 per 10,000 (0-17 years) compared to an average of 96.5, and is in line with the latest available national average which is 67 per 10,000.
- 4.2.** There has been a positive reduction in the number of children entering care from 179 in 2020 to 130 in 2021. However, this has not resulted in a significant reduction in the overall number of cared for children (534 at the end of March 2020 compared to 518 in 2021). There are a variety of reasons for this, which include delays within the court arena. However, we are constantly monitoring this and looking at ways to ensure that we are reviewing plans for children to achieve permanence at the earliest opportunity. Positively, the number of children where care orders have been discharged is increasing; so far this year (February 2022) we have discharged care orders for 16 children and there are a number of applications currently before the court so we are hopeful that this number will increase. Overall last year, we achieved seven discharges of care orders which represents a positive picture.
- 4.3.** There are a wide range of approaches being utilised with families on the edge of care to provide networks of support and to enable children and young people to stay living within their families and communities. This focused intervention and support can lead to lasting positive change for families.
- 4.4.** The timeliness of cared for children's reviews continues to be good and in Q3, this was at 97%. Additionally, 97% of children were involved in their reviews. It is really important that children and young people are involved in their plan, and we are always looking at how we can develop and improve their participation.
- 4.5.** We have recently celebrated National Apprenticeship Week and have used a variety of methods to increase apprenticeship awareness for our care leavers across the council. An [interview with our Apprenticeship Coordinator](#), Duncan Allen is available on Centranet. Duncan speaks passionately about his work and the importance of apprenticeships and work experience for our children and young people.

- 4.6.** Q3 data shows an increase in children placed with in-house foster carers (121 in Q3 compared to 109 in Q2). This is really positive and there are plans in place to increase recruitment of foster carers, which will mean that we can place more of our children with Cheshire East foster carers. Generally, we want children to remain local and within Cheshire East where possible. For some children, they may live out of the area because they need a specialist placement, or they want to be close to birth family who have moved away. Arrangements for any child who lives at a distance are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure this remains appropriate.
- 4.7.** We continue to work hard to reduce the number of children in residential care. Although the number has risen to 31 from 30 this quarter, we remain committed to ensuring that children have the opportunity of living within a family wherever possible. We hold monthly step-down meetings to review children's plans where there is a possibility of them moving to foster care or to return to family members. Overall, the progress in this area is encouraging and we have seven fewer children in residential care than during the same period last year. Currently we have 6% of our cared for children living in residential care, the national average is 10%.
- 4.8.** The number of adoptions continues to slowly increase with 11 children adopted so far this year and another 14 living in their adoption placements. Of the 11 children legally adopted so far this, unfortunately regarding the number of days from entering care to moving into placement with an adoptive family (A10), 7 out of the 11 were over 500 days, one was 1,207 days, which will have impacted our average number of days for the 11 adoptions to date. Locally and nationally the timescales for placing children within their adoptive families is monitored to avoid unnecessary delay for children. Pre-pandemic Cheshire East were in a strong position in relation to timeliness, above the regional and national average. However this has been significantly impacted because of the complexities involved in facilitating transitions and the impact of Covid-19. For those children where delay was experienced, their individual circumstances are well understood and we continue to scrutinise planning to ensure that children do not experience unnecessary delay.
- 4.9.** The number of 16 to 18-year-old young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is low. We have a dedicated 16 plus advisor within the virtual school, and this reflects the proactive work to keep our young people in education or support them into employment and training.
- 4.10.** The NEET data for our 19 to 21-year-old young people shows that 46% of this cohort are not engaged in education, employment or training. The national average for 2020/21 was 41%. We are looking closely at this data and the circumstances for these young adults which include pregnancy, parenting or illness, but are not exclusive to this.

- 4.11.** The next NEET programme is currently being planned and will run for 12 weeks during the spring term. This is a good way of engaging our young people and it is successful as a pathway to get young people involved in a range of activities and into education, employment or training. Previous NEET programmes have seen real successes for our young people.
- 4.12.** Despite the vast majority of health assessments being requested within 48 hours of children entering care (90% in Q2), there are some delays in these children being seen by a paediatrician. Q2 data indicated that 62% of these children had their initial health assessment within timescales, Q3 data is not yet available at the time of writing this report. As at Q3, 76% of our cared for children had an up-to-date annual health assessment. This data will be discussed with health colleagues to see what is causing delay so we can truly understand the full picture and manage this to ensure that the timeliness of health assessments for children improves.
- 4.13.** Q3 data shows that 97% of our care leavers are in appropriate accommodation. This is not 100% because we have a small number of young people who are in prison, and this is never recorded as being appropriate. This is currently less than five and as such the number is suppressed in line with DfE guidelines. Nationally the latest available data reported 95% of care leavers in suitable accommodation with 3% being in custody; the other main reasons for accommodation being classed as unsuitable is emergency accommodation or homelessness.
- 4.14.** An increasing number of care leavers now have up-to-date pathway plans (96% in Q3 compared to 90% in Q2). Hopefully, as further isolations and restrictions ease, we will be able to meet with individuals where reviews have been delayed.

## **5. Implications**

### **5.1. Legal**

- 5.1.1. There are no direct legal implications of this report.

### **5.2. Finance**

- 5.2.1. Although there are no direct financial implications or changes to the MTFs as a result of this briefing paper, performance measures may be used as an indicator of where more or less funding is needed at a service level.

### **5.3. Human Resources**

- 5.3.1. There are no direct human resource implications.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
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Appendices:	Corporate Parenting Scorecard 2021-22 Q3
Background Papers:	None