

## **BRIEFING REPORT**

### **Children and Families Committee**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	24 March 2022
<b>Report Title:</b>	Self-evaluation of Children's Services
<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 current self-evaluation form (SEF) for children's services which has been developed using a new self-assessment framework from the North West Association of Directors of Children's Services (NWADCS).
- 1.2.** The SEF meets the strategic aims and objectives in the council's Corporate Plan 2021-25 as it contributes to 'a council which empowers and cares about people' and the following priorities:
  - Protect and support our communities and safeguard children, adults at risk and families from abuse, neglect and exploitation
  - Be the best Corporate Parents to our children in care
  - Support all children to have the best start in life
  - Increase the opportunities for children, young adults and adults with additional needs
  - Ensure all children to have a high quality, enjoyable education that enables them to achieve their full potential.

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

- 2.1.** The SEF is a key document to ensure that leaders in children's services share their strengths and areas for development. As part of the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS), Cheshire East must share an annual self-evaluation of the quality and impact of social work practice. This document is also subject to a North West peer challenge and shared with Ofsted each year as part of an annual engagement meeting.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1.** Self-assessment is an integral part of planning and delivering continuously improving services to children, young people and their families. The SEF enables leaders to effectively identify areas of strength, development and actions to improve.
- 3.2.** Cheshire East's SEF (Appendix 1) sets out contextual information about the local area and services for children in Cheshire East and has been developed with input from teams across children's social care, early help, education, early years and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- 3.3.** In preparing our SEF, we have also sought peer challenge through the North West sector-led improvement programme. Cheshire East's peer challenge meeting took place on 7 January 2022 and provided an opportunity to reflect on the contents of the SEF, share good practice and identify regional priorities and programmes of support for the coming year. The SEF was revised following feedback from this meeting and in readiness for our 'annual conversation' with Ofsted.
- 3.4.** The annual conversation is a formal discussion between local authority senior leaders from Children's Services and Ofsted, and is intended to help local authorities to critically evaluate their own performance and articulate what they think is working well for children in their area. The SEF, along with supporting performance information and discussion, forms part of the intelligence Ofsted uses to decide where and when to inspect. Cheshire East's annual conversation with Ofsted took place on 2 February 2022.

### **4. Briefing Information**

- 4.1.** Cheshire East's self-evaluation is attached at Appendix 1. This document was completed in January 2022 and is largely based on quarter 2 data.
- 4.2.** The SEF document sets out the overall context for children and families in Cheshire East and then sets out detailed information in three main areas:
  - children's social care and early help
  - education and early years
  - SEND.
- 4.3.** Each of these sections begins with a summary page that gives an overview of each area before continuing to breakdown more detailed information for individual teams.
- 4.4.** The current SEF is structured under the following areas:
  - What have we delivered?
  - What have been our challenges?
  - What difference have we made?
  - What do we still need to do?

## 5. Implications

### 5.1. Legal

5.1.1. The report demonstrates adherence to Ofsted's guidance 'Inspecting local authority children's services', which was updated in December 2021. In particular, councils are asked annually to share a self-evaluation of social work practice with Ofsted and to meet with Ofsted regional representatives to discuss this. This part of the inspection framework is voluntary but plays an important role in the council's collaborative working with Ofsted and has been developed in conjunction with the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and the Local Government Association (LGA).

### 5.2. Finance

5.2.1. There are no finance implications of this report.

### 5.3. Human Resources

5.3.1. There are no known human resources implications of this report.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
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Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Cheshire East Self-Assessment January 2022
Background Papers:	<a href="#"><u>Inspecting Local Authority Services</u></a>