

Council

Date of Meeting:	19 October 2022
Report Title:	Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy Pledges
Report of:	Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care
Ward(s) Affected:	All Wards

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1.** Cheshire East Council has a statutory parenting responsibility towards all cared for children and care leavers aged 0-25. Those responsibilities include the necessity to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded from harm, have a safe place to live, enjoy education, training and employment with high aspirations for their futures, are healthy and cared for in ways which any good parent would for their own child.
- 1.2.** Our new Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2022-26 has been developed to support us to fulfil these responsibilities and sets out our 6 pledges to ensure we achieve this for all of our cared for children and care leavers. The Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy was endorsed by the Corporate Parenting Committee and Children and Families Committee in July 2022 and a recommendation made to bring the full pledges to Council for endorsement.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1.** Our Cared for Children and Care Leavers strategy has been developed with our cared for children and care leavers. They told us that some of the language used in our current Corporate Parenting Strategy is too clinical and not meaningful to them. We therefore worked together to rename our strategy the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy.
- 2.2.** During the development of the strategy, we have conducted an online survey to give foster carers an opportunity to share their views and ideas about the pledges.

- 2.3. We have held discussions during our workstream groups and the Corporate Parenting Operational Group where managers, frontline staff, councillors, education, voluntary sector, and health colleagues were able to share their views on the priority areas and actions and refresh the previous pledges.
- 2.4. In line with children and young people's wishes and we have added an additional pledge to focus on participation, i.e., listening to and involving our children and young people in decisions and services that affect them.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. It is recommended that the pledges are accepted and endorsed by the Council in order to make our commitment to our cared for children and care leavers as members and officers and ensure that there is a clear and joint vision to supporting cared for children and care leavers and that this is everyone's responsibility.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. The Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy has 6 pledges that were updated in collaboration with cared for children and care leavers as part of the strategy development. It is vital that the Council are aware of these priorities and the commitment to deliver against them.

Pledge 1- We will care for our cared for children and care leavers as any good parent would.

Pledge 2- We will improve education, training, and employment outcomes.

Pledge 3- We will be truly aspirational to give all children and young people a forever home and to keep them safe.

Pledge 4- We will improve health and wellbeing outcomes.

Pledge 5- We will prepare young people for adulthood.

Pledge 6- We will work TOGETHER with children and young people.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. No other options to be considered, Cheshire East has a legal duty to provide care for cared for children and care leavers.

6. Background

- 6.1. The previous Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018 to 2021 was endorsed by the Corporate Parenting Committee in November 2018, along with the 'youth proofed' pledges to cared for children and care leavers.
- 6.2. The pledges were subsequently accepted and endorsed by the full Council in December 2018 in order to make the commitment to cared for children and care leavers by members and officers and to ensure that there is a clear and

joint vision about Corporate Parenting in Cheshire East as being everyone's responsibility.

- 6.3. The council also decided that all key council decisions be considerate of the potential consequences and benefits to cared for children and care leavers, and that this be achieved by asking a mandatory question in each report about the impact of the decision upon cared for children and care leavers.
- 6.4. Good progress has been made in achieving the pledges set out in the 2018-20 Corporate Parenting Strategy. This progress has been reported to the Corporate Parenting Committee each year via the Corporate Parenting Annual Report.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1. During the development of the strategy, in March 2022 we conducted an online survey to give foster carers an opportunity to share their views and ideas. Their responses around the relevance of the pledges echoed that of the children and young people we spoke to, with some feeling the use of 'being a good corporate parent' is vague and lacks context. 72% felt that a pledge around participation should be included in our new strategy. Some foster carers commented that they would like improved communication with them to be included as part of the new strategy and we have developed actions to support this in our action plan. The Fostering Service is also reviewing our foster carer charter alongside foster carers to ensure that we can further strengthen communication with them.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

- 8.1.1. The proposed strategy meets the authority's statutory duties to cared for children and care leavers.

8.2. Finance

- 8.2.1. None

8.3. Policy

- 8.3.1. As a corporate parent, all council policies should consider the impact on cared for children and care leavers.

8.4. Equality

- 8.4.1. All children and young people have a right to be treated equally and have their disability, gender, ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic needs met. As corporate parents for children and young people in care and care leavers, it is essential that the council is able to demonstrate that it considers equality implications in all decisions made in relation to cared for children and care leavers. Cared for children and care leavers can be a vulnerable group because of their experiences so we need to ensure they are supported to achieve the same outcomes as their peers as they can experience disadvantages and are at risk of poorer outcomes.

8.5. Human Resources

- 8.5.1. The recruitment and retention of social workers and frontline colleagues is an essential component of the delivery of the strategy.

8.6. Risk Management

- 8.6.1. Cared for children and care leavers are a vulnerable group for whom there are a number of risks, including poor outcomes in education and training, health, safeguarding and transition into adulthood. The Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy outlines plans to mitigate these risks.

8.7. Rural Communities

- 8.7.1. All communities are affected by the contents of this report, and it is necessary to strategically plan the delivery of services to serve all communities.

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

- 8.8.1. The Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy sets out clearly our intentions to improve outcomes for cared for children and young people, along with our pledges and priorities for 2022-26.

8.9. Public Health

- 8.9.1. Cared for children and care leavers are more at risk of poor health outcomes. Health services need to be targeted to ensure that they meet the needs of this group of children and young people. A number of pledges within the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy addresses the health and wellbeing of this group of young people.

8.10. Climate Change

- 8.10.1. This strategy is aligned with the council's aim to be green to lead our communities to protect and enhance our environment, tackle the climate emergency and drive sustainable development. This includes our pledge to strive to ensure that every child and young person will have the opportunity to live in a good, safe home locally, either with their family or in another long-term home,

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Anmarie Parker Anmarie.Parker@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy, 2022-26. Appendix 2 - Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy, 2022-26 Pledges.
Background Papers:	The Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018-21 can be found at: corporate-parenting-strategy.pdf (cheshireeast.gov.uk)