

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 1st November 2022

Report Title: Care Leaver Survey and Cared for Children Survey Report

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to share recommendations and actions from Cheshire East Cared for Children and Care Leavers after taking part in the surveys and focus groups from October 2021 to September 2022. By listening to the wishes and feelings of our Cared for Children and Care Leavers we will ensure that Cheshire East is “a great place to be young”. It is also a great opportunity for Cheshire East Council to be “an open and enabling organisation”. Decision makers will be able to listen, learn and respond to our young people by having a “two-way conversation” as stated in the Council’s Corporate Plan.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 In October 2021 76 Cheshire East Care Leavers took part in the annual survey, then around 15 Care Leavers opted to take part in focus groups to provide recommendations for change and actions based on the findings of the survey. The Care Leaver Survey Report demonstrates a comparison with the feedback and results of the survey from 2019 so that we can see whether services and support has improved, stayed the same or worsened.

The themes of the survey and focus groups were:

- **Care Leaver Support Service**
- **Employment and Education**
- **Housing, Safety and Pathway Plan**
- **Family and Health**
- **Preparing for Adulthood**

- 2.2 In June 2022 80 Cheshire East Cared for Children took part in the annual survey, then around 10 Cared for Children opted to take part in focus groups and one to ones to provide recommendations for change and actions based on the

findings of the survey. The Cared for Children Survey Report demonstrated a comparison with the feedback and results of the survey from 2019 so that we can see whether services and support has improved, stayed the same or worsened.

The themes of the survey and focus groups were:

- **Support from social workers**
- **Coming into care**
- **Reviews and pathway plans**
- **Health**

Actions from Cheshire East Council and partners are outlined in separate action logs for cared for children and care leavers.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1.** For Corporate Parenting Committee to respond to the recommendations suggested by Care Leavers and feedback their support or suggestions for actions proposed in the action plan. The recommendations are the following:

Care Leaver Support Service:

Easier accessibility to the service. If my social worker/P.A. isn't available I should know who I can contact for support and help. An alternative contact.

If I contact my social worker/P.A. it can take up to 2 weeks to get a response. I think all social workers should respond within 3 working days. If a young person asks for something and it's not possible then social workers should have an open and honest conversation with young people about the decision and give reasons so that young people feel they have been listened to and understand why something can't happen.

Support from P.As shouldn't just stop at 25 years of age. Young people should be assessed and only stopped when the young person is ready.

For P.As to let young people know when they are going on annual leave and to ensure they know who they can contact in their absence.

For P.As to check in on young people at least every 6 months even when there's been no need for any communication. Just to check in so that young people feel like the support is still there.

3.2. Employment and Education:

There are no recommendations for these services as this time. However, something to note is that respondents were asked what barriers (if any) exist that is stopping them from getting an apprenticeship. The following barriers were identified:

- Mental Health
- Pregnancy/child to care for

- Location/Transport
- Current Job/Education

3.3. Housing, Safety and Pathway Plan

When young people are being moved, we should receive regular updates so that we feel like we are being supported.

For all young people to feel like they are being consulted about where they will be moving to.

3.4. Family and Health

If a decision has been made that a young person is not allowed to see a family member (even through supervised visits) then they should be informed, and reasons given so that young people understand why. Better communication from all concerned.

3.5. Preparing for Adulthood

For young people to start learning the skills to be independent from the age of 15 years old and not just before they turn 18. That way all young people feel prepared.

3.6. For Corporate Parenting Committee to respond to the recommendations suggested by Cared for Children and feedback their support or suggestions for actions proposed in the action plan. The recommendations are the following:

Support from Social Workers

For social workers to return calls to young people within 48 hours.

For social workers to send a text message to young people and tell them when they are going on annual leave, when they will be back in the office and the duty number to contact whilst they are on leave.

Make children and young people aware of what they are entitled to.

3.7. Coming into Care

26.09% of survey participants said that it wasn't clear what was happening when they came into care. This process should be improved e.g. regular communication, inclusive communication (words and pictures), regular check ins, wellbeing support

3.8. Reviews and Pathway Plans

For young people to be invited to all their reviews

Communicate with children and young people in a way that is suited to the individual, ask how they would like to be communicated with

Provide copies of reviews and plans to children and young people in a format that is accessible to them

Make sure meetings take place in a space that children and young people feel comfortable, this means more might attend and be part of making decisions

Improve coming into care e.g. communication, support, visits

3.9. Health

For the Health Team/Cared for Nurse to contact us to introduce themselves and provide contact details if we need them

Introduce leaflets before health assessments

Communicate the local offer more e.g. free gym membership for cared for children

Involve children and young people more in the health plan

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. The recommendations are based on the themes of the pledges made in Cheshire East's Cared for Children and Care Leaver Strategy and the lived experiences of our Cared for Children and Care Leavers. We should listen to our Cared for Children and Care Leavers, give feedback in a timely manner, communicate the changes we make and explain the reasons for not making changes when it is not possible.
- 4.2. By giving our cared for children and care leavers the opportunity to shape the services and support they receive, it means that we uphold the Corporate Parenting Principles e.g. to encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.
- 4.3. Recommendations have been considered and put into an action log for officers to work on across Cared for Children and Care Leaver services.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. At CPOG it was decided the participation team would deliver the large survey based on the strategy every 2 years. In October 2022 the team will focus on a small scale review of the local offer instead.

6. Background

- 6.1. The recommendations are based on the themes of the pledges made in Cheshire East's Cared for Children and Care Leaver Strategy and the lived experiences of our Cared for Children and Care Leavers. The recommendations and report have been brought to committee so that members can understand the wishes and feelings of Cared for Children and Care Leavers from Cheshire East and set out clear actions and objectives in response to those wishes and feelings.

- 6.2.** We should listen to our Cared for Children and Care Leavers, give feedback in a timely manner, communicate the changes we make and explain the reasons for not making changes when it is not possible.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1.** 76 Care Leavers took part in the annual survey in October 2021. Around 15 Care Leavers took part in focus groups to provide recommendations for change in January and February 2022.
- 7.2.** 80 Cared for Children took part in the annual survey in June 2022, then around 10 Cared for Children opted to take part in focus groups and one to ones in August and September 2022.

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

- 8.1.1.** None

8.2. Finance

- 8.2.1.** None

8.3. Policy

- 8.3.1.** None

8.4. Equality

- 8.4.1.** None

8.5. Human Resources

- 8.5.1.** None

8.6. Risk Management

- 8.6.1.** None

8.7. Rural Communities

- 8.7.1.** None

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

- 8.8.1.** Positive actions will happen as a result of listening to cared for children and young people e.g. improve their lives, happiness, feeling listened to.

8.9. Public Health

- 8.9.1.** None

8.10. Climate Change

- 8.10.1.** None

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Annie Britton
Appendices:	Care Leaver Survey Report 2021 V1 Care Leaver Survey 2021 Action Log Cared for Children Survey Report 2022 V2 Cared for Children Survey 2022 Action Log
Background Papers:	