

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Cared For Children and Care Leavers Committee

held on Tuesday, 3rd December, 2024 in the The Capesthorne Room - Town Hall, Macclesfield SK10 1EA

PRESENT

Councillor C Bulman (Chair)
Councillor J Saunders (Vice-Chair)

Councillors M Beanland, S Bennett-Wake, E Gilman, G Hayes, S Holland, B Posnett, B Puddicombe and L Braithwaite

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Theresa Leavy - Interim Executive Director of Children's Services
Lisa Davies, - Interim Improvement Director Children's Services
Richard Nash, - Interim Director of Family Help and Children's Social Care
Jessica Hillman - Team Manager, Cared for Children
Laura McCloughlin – Service Manager, Cared for Children
Laura Rogerson - Head of Service Inclusion
Annemarie Parker - Head of Service Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Josette Niyokindi - Associate Director of Quality & Safety Improvement, Integrated Care Board
Annie Britton - Participation Lead
Mimoza Gashi - North West Area Manager, The Children's Society (joined remotely via Microsoft Teams)
Karen Shuker - Democratic Services Officer

19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr D Clark. Cllr L Braithwaite attended as a substitute.

20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

21 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

22 UPDATE FROM THE SHADOW COMMITTEE

The committee received a presentation from the Care Leaver Ambassadors on the local offer. The presentation focused on feedback and recommendations following the local offer review event which took place on 13 November 2024.

Some of the feedback and recommendations from the event included:

- The need to expand out of hours support
- The leisure pass could instead be offered as a leisure budget to widen the scope of available activities
- The need for financial support with childcare for care leavers who were parents to secure work or training
- Support with gaining qualifications in English and maths, including online or at Care Leaver Hubs
- 'Starter kits' for young people moving into their own homes
- More support with the Homechoice process, such as a dedicated Housing Officer who could work with the Care Leavers Service
- The Setting up Home Allowance to be standardised regardless of age
- More emotional support and social events to build networks
- The need for laundry and personal hygiene facilities in Hubs
- Independence preparation to be gradual and begin before the age of 16 to allow for sufficient support in advance of independent living. Also to consider the ASDAN model for independence packs

The committee thanked the Care Leaver Ambassadors for sharing this feedback and recommendations and asked for assurances from officers that work would be undertaken in response. Officers advised that an update on the progress and impact of the implementation of these suggestions would be provided at subsequent meetings.

23 UPDATE FROM THE CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGIC BOARD (VERBAL UPDATE)

The committee received a verbal update from the Executive Director of Children's Services on the Corporate Parenting Strategic Board. New terms of reference had been agreed to ensure clarity around the work of the board and how it reports into the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Committee for scrutiny. Work streams were due to go live in January. There would be formal reporting into this committee on the progress of the work streams.

24 VIRTUAL SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The committee received the Virtual School Headteacher Annual Report 2023/24. The report presented an overview of the operation and impact of the virtual school during 2023/24.

The committee raised a number of queries including highlighting a scheme in Scotland to ensure that cared for children who received the required grades would be guaranteed a place at university. It was suggested that the Council have a discussion with MPs to lobby on this being extended to England.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

25 CARE LEAVERS ANNUAL REPORT 2024

The committee received the Care Leavers Service Annual Report 2024. The report highlighted the progress since the Ofsted inspection which concluded in March 2024.

Members asked for a progress update on the recruitment of social workers as concerns were regularly raised around recruitment challenges and high caseloads. The committee were advised that the issue was being addressed as part of the improvement plan and this included looking at international recruitment, converting agency social workers and looking at the retainment offer. It was noted that the Department for Education had recently raised its risk assessment from moderate to critical in relation to the number of social workers nationally.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

26 CHESHIRE EAST ADVOCACY AND INDEPENDENT VISITOR SERVICE - THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY ANNUAL REPORT

The committee considered the Cheshire East Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service Annual Report 2023-24 which provided an overview of the work undertaken between 1 October 2023 – 30 September 2024.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

27 CARED FOR CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS COMMITTEE QUARTER 2 SCORECARD 2024-25

The committee considered the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Scorecard which set out the performance of the service for quarter 2 of 2024-25.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 2.05 pm and concluded at 4.00 pm

Councillor C Bulman (Chair)