

Children and Families Committee

18 September 2023

Cared for Children and Care Leavers Committee Annual Report 2022-23

Report of: Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services

Report Reference No: CF/03/23-24

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose of Report

- 1 The Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee Annual Report 2022-23 (April 2022 – March 2023) at Appendix 1 sets out the work of the committee and progress against the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy over the past year.
- 2 This report supports the work of the committee in achieving the aim in the council's Corporate Plan to 'be the best corporate parents to our children in care.'

Executive Summary

- 3 The Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee Annual Report details the progress and achievements over 2022-23 against the six pledges the Council has made to cared for children and care leavers in the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children and Families Committee is recommended to:

1. Endorse the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee Annual Report 2022-23 as set out at Appendix 1.

Background

- 4 The Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee was established in May 2016 as the Corporate Parenting Committee. The name of the committee was changed to the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee in February this year in response to feedback from care experienced children and young people. It is a cross-party advisory committee, comprised of twelve cross-party councillors. Councillors were appointed on a politically proportionate basis and nominated by the political groups.
- 5 The purpose of the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee as an advisory committee to the Children and Families Committee is to ensure that the Council effectively discharges its role as corporate parent for all children and young people in care and care leavers from 0-25 years of age and holds partners to account for the discharge of their responsibilities.
- 6 The Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee Annual Report 2022-23 at Appendix 1 sets out the work of the committee and progress against the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy over the past year (April 2022 – March 2023).

Consultation and Engagement

- 7 Key stakeholders, including cared for children and young people and care leavers, are regularly consulted on the work of the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee and Council and partner services. The six pledges within the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy are based on what young people told us matters most to them.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 8 As an advisory committee to the Children and Families Committee, one of the roles of the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee is to act as advocate for cared for children and care leavers, ensuring that their needs are addressed through key plans, policies and strategies throughout the Council and its commissioned services.
- 9 The terms of reference for the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee included within the constitution set out a requirement for the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee to report to the Children and Families Committee on at least an annual basis.

Other Options Considered

- 10 It could be decided that the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee no longer needs to produce an annual report, but the annual report provides an opportunity for the Children and Families Committee

to review the effectiveness of this advisory committee and the impact on outcomes for cared for children and care leavers.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	The committee would not be sighted on progress against the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy. This includes information on how services are supporting cared for children, young people and care-experienced adults, and the committee would not be able to provide external scrutiny and evaluate if the service that is being delivered is effectively meeting children and young people's needs.	<p>The council is not effectively discharging its role as corporate parent for all children and young people in care, and care leavers from 0-25 years of age.</p> <p>Partners would not be held to account for the discharge of their responsibilities.</p> <p>Children and young people's needs are not being met.</p>

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 11 There is a range of legislation and statutory guidance that sets out the role of the local authority in respect of cared for children and care leavers. There are statutory obligations and guidance in relation to the local authority's role as corporate parent in the Children Acts 1989 and 2004; the Children and Young People Act 2008; the Children and Families Act 2014; and the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- 12 In particular, the Children and Social Work Act 2017 defines, for the first time in law, the role of corporate parents, in addition to expanding and extending support for care leavers.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 13 There are no financial implications or changes required to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as a result of the recommendation in this report. Services which support and deliver the Local Authority's corporate parenting role will continue to work to ensure that they operate within the MTFS approved budgets.

- 14 Bringing children into the care of the local authority represents a significant cost for the Council, and growth in the MTFS has been approved in recent years based on the increasing levels of demand and complexity of need, as well as the priority of achieving appropriate outcomes.
- 15 However, the childrens care budget continues to see financial pressures as demand and costs increase.

Policy

- 16 As a corporate parent, all Council policies should consider the impact on cared for children and care leavers.
- 17 This report supports the following priority within the Corporate Plan:

**A council which
empowers and cares
about people**

Be the best Corporate
Parents to our children in
care

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 18 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.

Human Resources

- 19 The number of children in care and care leavers has implications for staffing, both within children's social care and enabling services.

Risk Management

- 20 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.

Rural Communities

21 There are no direct implications for rural communities.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

22 The Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee Annual Report, aligned to the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy, sets out implications for cared for children and young people and priorities for 2022-23.

Public Health

23 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.

Climate Change

24 There are no climate change implications.

Access to Information	
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Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee Annual Report 2022-23
Background Papers:	The Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2022-26 and pledges can be found on the following link: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/care-and-support-for-children/services-from-childrens-social-care/cared-for-children/cared-for-children.aspx