

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Committee**
held on Tuesday, 30th March, 2021 at Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

PRESENT

Councillor K Flavell (Chairman)
Councillor J Saunders (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors R Bailey, M Beanland, J Buckley, C Bulman, P Butterill, S Edgar,
S Holland and M Warren

ALSO PRESENT

Ged Rowney- Interim Director of Children's Services
Kerry Birtles- Director of Children's Social Care, Children in Need & Child Protection
Laura Rogerson- Head of Service for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Virtual School Headteacher for Cared for Children
Nick Crick, Interim Head of Service for Cared for Services and Care Leavers
Dave Leadbetter, Head of Children's Commissioning
AnneMarie Parker, Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Lauren Conway- Interim Head of Service: Children's Service Development and Partnerships
Nicola Booth- Operations Manager, Adoption Counts
Hilary Thomas- Adoption Support Team Manager, Adoption Counts
Shan McParland- Designated Nurse Looked after Children and Care Leavers , NHS Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
Helen Davies- Democratic Services Officer

32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor James Barber.

33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

34 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting 19 January 2021 be received and noted as a correct and accurate record.

35 CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE REPORT- QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE

Nick Crick, Interim Head of Service for Cared for Services and Care Leavers introduced the item to the Committee and took the opportunity to introduce and welcome AnneMarie Parker to the meeting who had recently been appointed to the Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers post.

Nick advised the Committee that the report was laid out in terms of priorities for Cheshire East. This included support to ensure the most vulnerable were engaging with education.

Cheshire East would continue to monitor the recovery of children going back into Education and those who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

One specific point was that dental appointments were at 22%, the objective was to improve this figure in partnership with NHS.

The Committee were given the opportunity to ask questions and there was some discussion on:

- The steps being taken to address the low figures that related to dental appointments. This was a nationally recognised issue; Dentists were working at 45% capacity since reopening during the pandemic which has been a barrier;
- Tracking and tracing vulnerable children who are NEET, virtual school came under the same remit for Cheshire East with the same support mechanisms for all school children;
- The challenge of attracting new adopters. When children were placed for adoption, they were continually reviewed;
- The NEET figure for 18+ was high even though it was below the national average. Nick advised the health and emotional wellbeing challenges for young people was an area for improvement for the service and confidence, self-esteem and low morale was a high priority for this year.

RESOLVED-

That Nick and AnneMarie be thanked for their attendance and update, and that the report be received and noted.

36 CARED FOR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Laura Rogerson, - Head of Service to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Virtual School Headteacher for Cared for Children

introduced the item to the Committee. Laura highlighted key points of the report:

- Virtual school attendance had been at 50-60% during lockdown and since returning to school had gone up to 90% with no significant issues. During Lockdown those who weren't in school had a temporary support plan;
- Remote learning had been reviewed and any further support that was needed had been identified, any issues were then raised with social care and the schools. PEPS (Personal Educational Plan) had been continued and these were at just over 90% for over school age children and 97% post 16. The next stage was to look at the impacts and targets of PEPs and to link with the participation team to survey young people for data and analysis;
- A governing body had been formed and two meetings had been held;
- A Student Council was being developed and implemented alongside the governing body (over next 12 months);
- Foster parents were supported with some funding for devices for young people so no one was without technology; and
- There had been no increase in exclusions but an increase in schools reaching out ahead of potential exclusions, this included those both in and out of borough.

The Committee were given the opportunity to ask questions. There was some discussion on:

- The possibility of work based placements or Apprenticeships within the Council;
- The possibility of one of the Members of this Committee to sit on the Virtual School Governing Body;
- The need to integrate Cared for Children into society and being mindful of creating niche environments that take them away from society.

RESOLVED-

That Laura Rogerson be thanked for her attendance and update and that the report be received and noted.

37 CARED FOR SUFFICIENCY STATEMENT

Councillor Carol Bulman advised the Chairman that during this item she would temporarily leave the meeting and rejoin as soon as she could.

Dave Leadbetter, Head of Children's Commissioning presented the item to the Committee.

The Committee were advised that legislation required the Council to publish an annual Sufficiency Statement for Cared for Children. The Council ensure the Statement aligned with other Council strategies and plans and included direct feedback from children.

Dave noted that alongside the approach to the Sufficiency Statement, that centred around children were best supported within their families and their local communities, any Ofsted Inspection would focus on how the Council managed during the pandemic and what the challenges were.

Some of the priority actions for 2021-23 included recruitment and retention of internal foster carers through a new fostering brand, recruitment and marketing strategy. The target was for 30 foster carers and 6 short break carers and 6 specialist foster carers.

The Committee were given the opportunity to ask questions or make comments. There was some discussion on:

- The positive work being done through the Mockingbird programme and the recognition from the Committee about the work from the Officers and the service for Cared for Children;
- The admissions for care figures were low because there was an emphasis to ensure only the correct children were brought into care. The low figure reflected a positive outcome as less had been brought in. The Council provided a robust Early Help and Prevention offer and an understanding that Children were better to remain with their families. The Children in Need population was healthy, there was an increase in the number of children in pre-proceedings. However the service was managing risks earlier to prevent children coming into care;
- There was a question that related to whether the pandemic could be a reason for low figures throughout the report. Officers reassured the Committee that numbers were one indicator of how the system looks overall. Ofsted were satisfied that the thresholds were correct and continued to be correct. The service did not want a re-referral rate as it was currently at 14% and below national average, however, Cheshire East was not an outlier but there was more to be done;
- The new volunteer approach through early help was considered to be a more sustainable model; and
- Officers reminded the Committee that any quality items and products they had or knew off that could be suitable for Young people would be accepted.

RESOLVED-

That Dave be thanked for his attendance and presentation and that the report be received and noted.

38 PROPOSAL ON CHANGES TO THE MEETING FREQUENCY

The Chairman addressed the Committee and gave the reasons, as outlined in the report, for the proposal to change the meeting frequency from bi monthly to quarterly these being primarily the work of the Committee would be more efficient and align with officer quarterly reports.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that the Corporate Parenting Committee is a statutory committee sits within the Children and Families Directorate. Members did not have to come from the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and would continue to be made from nominations from political groups in alignment with political proportion.

The Committee were given the opportunity to make comments on the proposal.

Councillor Bailey made the point that this would be a premature decision when there were uncertainties about the model for the Committee System and would prefer to defer the proposal until the Committee System model is better known. One of the concerns from Councillor Bailey that when there was a change of governance the role of Corporate Parenting could slip.

There was an agreement from the Committee that the Corporate Parenting role was primary for Members.

Councillor Carol Bulman re-joined at this point in the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the meeting frequency be retained as it currently stands with a review following the implementation of the new Committee System.

39 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item pursuant to Section 100(A) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and the public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

40 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Nicola Booth, Operations Manager for Adoption Counts introduced the item to the Committee.

Councillor Jos Saunders joined the meeting.

The Committee considered a Six Monthly report on the Adoption Service from Adoption Counts. The report fulfilled the obligations in Adoption National Minimum Standards (2011) and Adoption Service Statutory Guidance (2011) Adoption and Children Act 2002 to report to the “executive side” of the local authority.

The report gave an overview of specific numbers of children subject to Placement Orders, those with a Change of Plan, those Placed for Adoption and those Adopted. Nicola spoke to the Committee about performance of the organisation during the period, aims of the service, funding, referrals and enquiries for Adoption Support.

RESOLUTION:

That Nicola be thanked for her attendance and presentation and that the report be received and noted.

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and concluded at 5.45 pm

Councillor K Flavell (Chairman)