

Corporate Parenting Committee

Agenda

Date: Tuesday, 30th March, 2021
Time: 4.00 pm
Venue: Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

How to Watch the Meeting

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The agenda is divided into 2 parts. Part 1 is taken in the presence of the public and press. Part 2 items will be considered in the absence of the public and press for the reasons indicated on the agenda and in the report.

PART 1 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any disclosable pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in any item on the agenda.

3. **Minutes of Previous meeting** (Pages 3 - 8)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2021.

4. **Corporate Parenting Update Report- Quarter 3 Performance** (Pages 9 - 20)

To consider the Corporate Parenting Update Report for Quarter 3 Performance.

Contact: Helen Davies
Tel: 01270 685705
E-Mail: helen.davies@cheshireeast.gov.uk

5. **Cared for Children's Education** (Pages 21 - 26)

To receive an update on Cared for Children's Education.

6. **Cared For Sufficiency Statement** (Pages 27 - 76)

To receive a Sufficiency Statement for Cared for Children.

7. **Proposal on changes to the meeting frequency** (Pages 77 - 86)

To receive a proposal on the changes to the frequency for this Committee.

8. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

The reports relating to the remaining items on the agenda have been withheld from public circulation and deposit pursuant to Section 100(B)(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the matters may be determined with the press and public excluded.

The Committee may decide that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items pursuant to Section 100(A)4 of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

PART 2 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITHOUT THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT

9. **Adoption Six Monthly Report** (Pages 87 - 108)

To receive the Adoption 6-monthly report.

Membership: Councillors R Bailey, J Barber, M Beanland, J Buckley, C Bulman, P Butterill, S Edgar, K Flavell (Chairman), S Holland, J Saunders (Vice-Chairman) and M Warren

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Committee**
held on Tuesday, 19th January, 2021 as a Virtual Meeting

PRESENT

Councillor K Flavell (Chairman)
Councillors R Bailey, M Beanland, J Buckley, C Bulman, P Butterill, S Edgar
and S Holland

VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor Arthur Moran

ALSO PRESENT

Kerry Birtles- Director of Children's Social Care, Children in Need & Child Protection
Laura Rogerson- Head of Service to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Virtual School Headteacher for Cared for Children
Keith Martin- Head of Service for Children with Disabilities and Fostering
Lauren Conway- Interim Head of Service for Children's Service Development and Partnerships
Nick Crick- Interim Head of Service for Cared for Services and Care Leavers
Shan McPartland- Designated Nurse Looked after Children and Care Leavers
NHS Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
Helen Davies- Democratic Services Officer

26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of Absence were received from Councillors James Barber, Jos Saunders and Mick Warren.

27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

28 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED-

That the minutes of the meeting 17 November 2020 be received and noted as a correct and accurate record.

29 CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE UPDATE REPORT

Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care, Children in Need & Child Protection presented the item to the Committee and Nick Crick the Interim Head of Service for Cared for Services and Care Leavers was available to answer any questions the Committee had.

Kerry advised that at the time of writing, Cheshire East was in Tier 2, High Alert restrictions but following that the country went into a third lockdown, the focus remained on the impact for children and young people.

The regulations for social workers had remained the same as April 2020, they were reviewed in September 2020 and would be in place until end of March 2021. There had been a lot of positive feedback from frontline colleagues who had felt supported within the service.

There was an update to report following government announcement on what lockdown meant for vulnerable children going into education.

Carers, parents and young people now had more knowledge around the pandemic and making informed decisions that related to the pandemic.

Early in the pandemic there had been a scoping exercise of 534 young people that showed 150 Cared for Children were Not in Education.

Kerry gave some reassurance to the Committee that the service was clear about who these children were and there was risk assessments for each situation and the challenge was back to safeguarding children's partnership.

The service wanted to maintain the same level of service delivery that enabled children to see birth parents. Permanency was something that had increased.

Last year, 14 young people achieved permanency, there had been 12 to date due in part to good efforts by court for an even spread of prioritisation. Courts deal with new and emerging cases but also had responsibility for permanency too. This area of work was moving at pace now.

In terms of Children with adoption, there was more work to do because of drift and delay in achieving permanency.

There were six children no longer in care but around 50 needed to move through system and were no longer in care. The service did not want children in care if they didn't need to be.

In terms of the Care leaver cohort, these were vulnerable, some had the impact of living alone, some felt isolated, some were young adults who had transitioned earlier and now had layers of complexity because of pandemic. The service would keep reaching out to them. There had been a piece of work commissioned with CCG, that related to emotional well being and fitness. Vulnerable young people now had free access to wellbeing courses.

There had been one young person who was Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) who wanted to become self employed and was given some funding to develop maternity bags and that generated employment for herself.

The Committee were given the opportunity to ask questions.

There was some discussion around the access vulnerable children and young people had to devices, Kerry gave reassurance to the Committee that Schools were open and welcoming, and where remote learning is in place, internet and devices had been put in place.

The Committee noted there had been some publicity regarding businesses with spare devices that had been utilised for Cared for Children.

Nick advised the Committee that all Cared for Children had been written to, to ensure they knew they were supported within the care system.

It was noted the increase in NEET children related to Cared for Children and this cohort of children and young people was easier for the Council to influence as the Council was the corporate parent. There were bigger numbers of NEET in Child Protection and Children in Need teams where the parents had the decision making

The Committee noted that the target for Personal Education Plans was to get to 90% by Christmas, Kerry advised the landscape had changed and Children in transition groups and key stages taking SATS had been prioritised. This could be an area for more detail at the next committee.

RESOLVED-

That the report be received and noted

30 HEALTH OF CARED FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ANNUAL REPORT

Shan McPartland- Designated Nurse Looked after Children and Care Leavers NHS Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) presented the item to the Committee that highlighted the responsibilities for the CCG and the key legislation that CCG worked from.

The Committee were made aware that the Annual Report covered 2019-2020, however toward end of year, the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on the work of the last quarter.

The Committee were advised that in April 2020 the 4 CCGs in Cheshire merged to become one CCG Cheshire, however for purposes of the report, the data referred to the west and south/mid CCG.

There were 533 cared for children at that time, a 10% increase on the previous year and there had been a rise of 24% the year before. 170

children were placed into Cheshire East by other Local Authorities. Received same service that Cheshire East would receive- not the case in other areas, unwanted variation- quality of arrangements CQC 2016, not seen, not heard- areas such as access to timely health services and mental health for looked for children across England can vary.

There was a statutory requirement of 20 days for children to have a health assessment with a paediatrician. There had been a drop due to capacity within clinics as doctors had been isolating because of Covid and shortages of staff.

There had been challenges this year within the pandemic, but there had been greater scrutiny of late appointments and there was a focus to make pathways more streamlined.

In terms of the key performance indicators- dental checks for children across Cheshire east whilst was consistent, was lower than the CCG would like. There had been extreme difficulties accessing dental services during the pandemic. Face to face appointments were at 40% capacity once reopened after lockdown.

The CCG were trying to create a commissioning pathway to address dental services for cared for and looked after children nationally.

Immunisation was excellent and well above national average. Developmental checks, performed well, Care leaver health summaries- 2019/20 100% care leavers received a summary of their health.

Throughout year, themes identified were as expected: wellbeing issues, attachment, previous trauma, smoking and substance, social communication difficulties, and self-harm.

There were gaps and risk that related to the mental and emotional support for young people up to 25 and children placed into Cheshire East by other Local Authorities, these risks had been escalated risks and were being reviewed nationally.

The 2020-21 priorities included:

- continuation of reviewing arrangement for Initial Health Assessments;
- Annual Quality Assurance visit to Prover services by Designated Nurse; and
- Development of an effective tool that can be used to measure health outcomes for Cared for Children

In summary 2019-20 had not been easy in addressing priorities but the CCG was looking to address the work for 2020-21.

The Committee were invited to ask questions.

There was some discussion about how the nurse did health visits for out of area children. Shan advised there was a notification system and handover from nurses. For any issues that related to Outpatient, hospital, ADHD or speech this was handed over to where child is placed. If the level of service was not as good, Cheshire will retain the workload and nurses will travel to ensure health needs are being met.

With regard to immunisation, if the child was below school age it was received as part of national healthy child programme and done at the GP practice. School children are included within schools.

RESOLVED:

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

31 FOSTERING SERVICE PRESENTATION

Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care, Children in Need & Child Protection presented the item to the Committee on behalf of Keith Martin, Head of Service for Children with Disabilities and Fostering.

The Committee were advised that following an independent fostering review, the Council had severed the relationship with Foster 4. Cheshire East felt it was important to have a clear vision for fostering with an aligned vision and strategy.

The Communications team within the Council supported the marketing strategy (that related to the recruitment of mainstream foster carers) and used marketing as a principle within a workstream.

There had been positive feedback from the community about the advertisements, with powerful and impactful mail drops. The marketing extended to buses and maildrops, and included pictures to resonate with potential fosterers.

There had been 90 enquiries following the departure from Foster 4. Expressions of interest (EOI) were then assessed in-house. During the same period in the previous year, the service received 59 Enquiries and 15 EOI. Comparatively this equated to 31 additional enquiries to the year before with a 50% increase on previous EOIs.

To date there had been 14 new homes found for fostered children.

The Committee were advised that the whilst the marketing needed momentum, it was important to find the right moments to avoid messages becoming white noise.

There were plans to implement a Mobile messaging app, this would enable someone to answer enquiries immediately and stop potential people going to other agencies.

There had been approval of 7 new mainstream foster carers compared to 4. Kerry also advised that currently the context was that there were people not in employment who could potentially foster but the service needed to ensure any ambition from a potential foster carer was realistic and could meet the needs of the child.

143 children currently lived with foster carers agencies. 50 had been matched with carers that are identified as forever homes. 5 carers had left the agency to come to Cheshire East which demonstrated the offer and relationships that were being built. Cheshire East was a strong competitor now and the cost saving was now evident.

The Chairman noted that this was a very positive news story and the Committee were given the opportunity to ask questions.

There was some discussion on what made a suitable foster carer, Kerry advised the recruitment strategy was focused on this area to demonstrate there was no discrimination, there had been a young man with complex disabilities fostered with a man, the male carer had previously adopted and the complex child fitted in and came out of care.

There were 4 or 5 respite carers however this was a specific skill set to care for children with special needs.

RESOLVED:

That Kerry Birtles be thanked for the update and that it be received and noted.

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and concluded at 5.24 pm

Councillor K Flavell (Chairman)



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Key Decision N

Date First
Published: N/A

DECISION REPORT

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 30 March 2021

Report Title: Corporate Parenting Update Report

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

Senior Officer: Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care

1. Report summary

- 1.1. This report will advise the Corporate Parenting Committee of how the service are delivering the priorities for cared for children and care leavers which are clearly set out in the Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- 1.2. This report will provide the fifth update to the Corporate Parenting Committee since the restrictions of Covid-19 came into force. Services for cared for children and care leavers embraced new ways of working in the initial stages of the pandemic, this report will outline any existing variations to our statutory service delivery and also highlight the progress in planning for children and young people, as we approach 12 months into the pandemic.

2. Recommendation/s

- 2.1. Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to:
 - Note the contents of the report
 - Provide support and challenge to the local authority actions in respect of the report.

3. Reasons for Recommendation/s

- 3.1. The Corporate Parenting Committee is an advisory group to the Cabinet and, as such, needs to be aware of any national or local issues that are likely to impact on cared for children and care leavers. The Corporate Parenting Committee needs to be able to scrutinise and challenge performance to improve outcomes for cared for children and young people and care leavers.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. None; this is an update report.

5. Background

- 5.1. The report provides an update to the Corporate Parenting Committee since the last report which was presented on the 19 January 2021. Frontline services, in line with the priorities set out in the Corporate Parenting Strategy, continue to deliver our statutory duties. 12 months into the pandemic we continue to see evidence of permanence for children within the Court arena, including an increasing number of children achieving adoption than in previous year, where 24 babies and children (twice as many last year) have been matched and permanently placed (as of February 2021) and where children and young people require a forever home in long term foster care. The tremendous efforts of our frontline colleagues, partners and children and young people themselves is testament to the resilience that exists within the services that we deliver and the children and families that we serve.
- 5.2. The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 for Children's Social Care services continue to reflect the amendments authorised on the 25 September 2020. This ultimately means that frontline services have a statutory obligation to operate within 'a mainly business as usual' model. There remains a small number of regulations in place to assist social care services in responsibly managing their statutory safeguarding responsibilities to children and young people whilst managing the risks of the virus to frontline practitioners. We are now working with established weekly reporting systems which identify how and where we are applying the amended regulation, in the main in relation to some Covid specific virtual visits and regularly undertake quality assurance activity which provides reassurance around the appropriate use of the regulations. These temporary regulations remain in place and have been extended from March 2021 following a public consultation.

- 5.3. We oversee and report on a daily basis staff welfare and vaccination rates across our workforce.
- 5.4. The service continue to use individual risk assessments to support safe services delivered for children, young people, their parents, carer and family members and also our frontline colleagues. These risk assessments include physical risk management and also the emotional impact of the prolonged period of alternative ways of working where there are many avenues available including mindfulness, the employee assistance programme and home based risk assessment. The corporate response to promoting diversity, equality and inclusion throughout the pandemic for the families who access our services and the frontline colleagues who deliver the service has been well received.

6. Pledge 1 - Being a Good Corporate Parent

- 6.1 We are proud to appoint Annemarie Parker as permanent Head of Service for Cared for Children and Care Leavers, she starts with us on 1 March 2021, following the successful period of an interim Head of Service covering for the last few months who will now manage the handover to Annemarie.
- 6.2 Cheshire East Council is committed to the pledges of the Corporate Parenting Strategy which were endorsed at full council on the 13 December 2018. We are keen to truly understand the lived experience of our children and young people and like no other time before we must ensure that their views, wishes and feelings are captured and shape the way forward in how we continue to prioritise their needs. We have rolled out the participation and engagement survey in early January 2021 with the intention of truly understanding their lived experiences of the broadest audience of children and young people. We also plan to subsequently shape our participation and engagement offer as we take the very best bits of the pandemic and where alternative ways of working have been helpful for children and young people into new ways of working with our children, young people and care leavers, being led by My Voice.
- 6.3 We must, particularly at this time, look to prioritise our cared for children and young people and care leavers where we know they are likely to have experienced the pandemic in a detrimental way. Some of these known areas are in relation to access to employment, education and training, mental health services and where they are experiencing social isolation. Colleagues across the frontline, and partners agencies, are focused on how we offer services creatively

across the council to ensure that these young people are prioritised as we move through the pandemic.

6.4 Corporate Parenting Committee will be aware of the plans to ensure corporate parenting members have an up to date enhanced DBS, we are pleased that since the last committee, we only have one outstanding DBS to process. We will continue to monitor this and advise on when reviews are due. Elected members are supported to be much closer to frontline colleagues and engaged meaningfully with children and young people and so embraced the challenge of becoming proactive members to a number of unique opportunities. These opportunities include attendance at our corporate parenting subgroups, one-to-one tutoring and virtual visits to our commissioned childrens homes. Feedback from those interactions has already demonstrated impact as members are reporting having a better understanding of the pressures faced by frontlines colleagues as well as a greater understanding of the complexity of need presented across the service. We will continue to use this feedback to develop participation and services.

6.5 We are ambitious corporate parents to our children and young people and care experienced adults and made the commitment in 2017 to embrace the covenant and new statutory duties and the responsibility upon local authorities to extend their support to care experienced adults to 25. The Care Leavers Service 'reach out' to our care experienced adults who have chosen not to continue to access a service, and pre-Covid we saw a relatively low response to our extended offer of support. We have seen however an increase in care experienced adults accepting the support offered during the pandemic and this has seen additional support provided in relation to emotional wellbeing, finances and support with employment. We have written to all care leavers to ensure they understand support, help and advice is available to them. This is evidence of our corporate parenting commitment. We are now considering what the prolonged period of additional demand could mean for capacity with the service as well as potential recovery from the pandemic.

7. Pledge 2 – We will improve education, employment and employment outcomes.

7.1 The educational experience of our cared for children has continued to be a priority as we transitioned back to education. We have established and robust safeguarding measures in place to track and review vulnerable pupils not in education, and those who are electively home educated. Support is made available to children and families in

this situation. We have established a partnership planning meeting to look at any such children and young people and worked closely between the school, Virtual School, and parents/foster carers to ensure education is being provided.

- 7.2 The Virtual School and frontline teams continue to focus on frequency of Personal Education Plan (PEP) completion and quality related to targetted support to ensure that we continue to have high aspirations for our children and young people.
- 7.3 The Virtual School Governing Body was launched in February 2021. The Director of Children's Social Care is the Chair of Governors. Core members include representatives from across all partners including schools and carers. This governing body will allow the Virtual School to have the same level of support, scrutiny and challenge that would exist within mainstream and specialist provision and will provide an additional avenue to challenge our statutory responsibilities and outcomes for children and young people, as well as also monitor and support the longer term consequences of the pandemic.
- 7.4 The service and the broader Council continue to be focused on not in education, employment or training (NEET) for our 16-18 year old cared for children and our care experienced adults. Our NEET figure for 16-18 years olds remains steady at around 4-6% on average. More targetted support is being put into supporting and prioritising our care experienced adults and where opportunities for creative ways of furthering their skills and employment opportunities exist, that we action this for them.
- 7.5 We are looking to actively re-develop our offer to care leavers for apprenticeships and work based placements, working with the Virtual School, Workforce Development and the Commissioning Service, and expect to launch this by the summer.

8 Pledge 3 - Achieving Permanence and Keeping Children Safe

- 8.1 Achieving permanence for cared for children and care leavers is one of our service priorities and we have a clear plan to ensure that the children who do require local authority care receive this in a timely way, that the care they receive is excellent and for children who no longer need to be in care, that there plans are progressed without delay.
- 8.2 Corporate Parenting Committee will be familiar with the impact of Covid-19 in achieving permanence in a timely way and that the initial stages of the pandemic created a significant challenge. However I am pleased to share that we are now seeing those delays reduce, with

children achieving their permanent plans by way of adoption, special guardianship and discharges of care orders. We are faced with a smaller but still significant challenge of the culmulative backlog of Court progression work and continue to work closely with the Local Family Justice Board to progress this.

- 8.3 We have been successful in funding a legal executive to work closely with team managers to address delays and promote permanency for our children and young people, and support rapid work with revocations on orders of cared for children placed at home.
- 8.4 Throughout the pandemic, our commissioned service to children who go missing from care has continued to operate and has seen success in maintaining an offer to children and young people that can respond in a timely way and disrupt this risky behaviour. The number of children missing can vary week by week, however every child who experiences a missing episode will be offered a return home interview where in-depth discussions take place to inform subsequent risk assessments from the social worker who can consider the bigger picture. This is subject to scrutiny and review regarding compliance and effectiveness of existing procedures.
- 8.5 Our children who are living out of borough or 'at a distance' represent around 40% of our cared for population and include children living with Cheshire East foster carers, children placed for adoption, with parents and family members, and also children in independent residential and foster care. Our last inspection offered reassurance that our children who live outside of Cheshire East are at no detriment and our statutory services delivered throughout the pandemic have continued to ensure that our children are seen and plans progress. We have undertaken random dip sampling to assure ourselves of consistent practice and service, irrespective of where our children live.
- 8.6 Our vision for children and young people is focused on children living in the borough where we believe their needs will be best met and we continue to develop a range of sufficiency options including our Bespoke children's homes. Our first Mockingbird constellation was launched in November 2020, this continues to make great progress and have impact with the children and carers directly involved.
- 8.7 Regionally, we have a commitment to ensure that we do not criminalise cared for children in placements. We are actively contributing to a regional group of local authorities that has been established, working with Police and Youth Justice, to develop a protocol and guidance for our care establishments to ensure we support and engage our children

and young people placed in care, with draft report due in the summer of 2021.

- 8.8 Following the request at the last Corporate Parenting Committee, we have developed a quick and easy guide on who can be a foster carer (included in the Appendix), to help support members in responding to queries when promoting our fostering offer.

9 Pledge 4 – We will Improve Health and Wellbeing Outcomes

- 9.1 The previous Corporate Parenting Committee received the annual report on the health of our cared for children.
- 9.2 Overall, performance in relation to requests for initial health assessments, completion of initial health assessments and annual review health assessments continues to deliver timely and robust health assessments for children and young people.
- 9.3 There continue to be challenges in relation to access to routine dental appointments because of the impact of surgery availability and practices not taking new patients, however it is positive that over the Cheshire footprint an additional 4 dental practices are being developed where cared for children will be prioritised. However, we continue to have a low number of children and young people with dental checks up to date, but whilst this is a national feature, as most dental practices are only managing emergencies and many carers have been adverse to routine checks, we will be addressing these outstanding children and young people to ensure improved reporting and performance in future, working closely with Looked After Children Nurses and foster carers to establish this.

10 Pledge 5 – We will prepare young people for Adulthood

- 10.1 The care leavers service continues to be focused on supporting the needs of our care experienced adults in relation to accommodation, NEET, social isolation, emotional wellbeing and relationships.
- 10.2 We are pleased that we have been able to continue dedicated emotional wellbeing support with the CCG, provided by Pure Insight, as we continue to explore with the CCG psychological support to Adoption Services. The fitness and wellbeing provision (RAGE fitness) for care experienced young adults is now launched and we actively continue to engage young people with referrals to participate in this programme, offering therapy, advice, support; an offer that has been well received in different local authorities.

12 Implications of the Recommendations

12.1 Policy Implications

- 12.1.1 Cheshire East is ambitious and committed to ensuring it is a great place to be young. Our priorities are supported and driven through the Council's Corporate Plan, the Children and Young People's Plan and the Health and Wellbeing Strategic Plan. Our Corporate Parenting Strategy has a clear vision that our cared for children and care leavers are safe, happy, healthy and achieve their full potential.

12.2 Legal Implications

- 12.2.1 The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 were introduced to provide flexibility in the statutory obligations of local government relating to cared for children, adoption and fostering. The current flexibilities have been agreed to be extended past March 2021 following a public consultation.

12.3 Financial Implications

- 12.3.1 There are no financial implications or changes needed to the MTFS as a result of the recommendations of this report.

12.4 Equality Implications

- 12.4.1 Cared for children and care leavers can be a vulnerable group because of their experiences and so the impact of Covid-19 could mean further marginalisation.

12.5 Human Resources Implications

- 12.5.1 HR and Public Health have been supportive of officers in ensuring that robust risk assessments are in place and available to staff in undertaking their duties.

12.6 Risk Management Implications

- 12.6.1 Cared for children and care leavers are a vulnerable group that are at risk of a number of factors, including poor education and training, health, safeguarding and transition into adulthood; the Corporate Parenting Strategy prioritises these areas.

12.7 Rural Communities Implications

- 12.7.1 There are no direct rural communities' implications of this report.

12.8 Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

- 12.8.1 The contents of this report have implications for cared for children and care leavers, who are some of Cheshire East's most vulnerable children.

12.9 Public Health Implications

- 12.9.1 The impact of Covid-19 is well documented within this report.

12.10 Climate Change Implications

- 12.10.1 There is a commitment to ensure that Cheshire East cared for children live as close to their home community as possible, wherever this is safe to do so. This will ensure that children can continue to feel connected to their families and local community. It also reduces the geographical footprint of children, families and staff as travel is reduced.

13 Ward Members Affected

- 13.1 Although the number of Cheshire East cared for children and young people is relatively small, they are a vulnerable cohort, who live across Cheshire East and in other local authority areas.

14 Consultation & Engagement

- 14.1 My Voice, our cared for children council continue to meet virtually on a weekly basis. They provide their views on topics that affect their lives and have been a key stakeholder, sharing their views with the Committee System. This is taking new development to ensure consistent engagement and participation.
- 14.2 The local authority is currently undertaking an annual participation survey that will help the service to continue to understand the needs of our children and young people and align any newly identified needs to the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

15 Access to Information

- 15.1 None.

16 Contact Information

- 16.1 Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

Name: Kerry Birtles

Job Title: Director of Children's Social Care
Email: Kerry.Birtles@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Appendix

So, who can be a foster carer?

There is no such thing as the perfect foster carer, and none of us have houses that are perfect either! We are not looking for perfect people, we're looking for down to earth people who are prepared to make a commitment, who like and care about children, want to do the right thing and make a difference.

You can be a foster carer for a child up to the age of 2 years, even if you don't have a spare bedroom, with the child sleeping in your room.

To foster children over the age of 2, you need to have a spare bedroom the child can call their own. It is important that this is the child's own space and so this cannot be the room of one of your children who is at University and may return home during holidays or a room that you use for grandchildren or family and friends for sleepovers, it needs to be a room dedicated to fostering.

You don't need to be a parent, but you will need to be able to have some experience of and knowledge about caring for children.

Everyone in your home needs to be open to the idea of becoming part of a fostering household. This means that if you live with a partner, husband or wife, they will also be part of the fostering assessment. We need to be confident that they are committed to fostering, and that they understand what fostering will mean for them. If you have birth children living with you, talk to them about fostering and explain to them what it means, we will want to talk to them during the assessment to make sure that they do understand and to check that they feel ok about it.

If you're single, then that's fine too, we have lots of single carers. If you have a partner who often comes and stays over with you, then we'll need to involve them in the assessment as they will probably be a frequent visitor to your household. We will also need to do some checks in relation to them as well - with their permission.

If you have a health issue or a disability that's fine if you're confident that you can meet the needs of a child while they are with you.

If you have a job, you don't need to give this up, but you do need to have the flexibility to attend meetings about your placed child, or do school pickups from school, or be at home if the child is unwell.

You need to be 21 years old or over. There is no upper age limit. No matter young or old you are, you need to have the energy and willingness to meet all a child's needs.

You don't need to be able to drive, or to have a car, though being a foster carer is easier if you do have a car. Fostering involves taking to and collecting children from school, and possibly also to other meetings and appointments. If you don't have a car, we would think carefully about which children could be placed with you and try to arrange it so that you can manage the transport commitments by walking or public transport.

We will have to check whether any adult in your household has a criminal conviction. We do this by doing a Disclosure and Barring check or DBS (this used to be called a CRB check). This can only happen once we have your written consent, so don't worry that we will do it without you knowing about it. If you do have some criminal offences, then we'll talk to you about what happened and why it happened and what your reflections are

about it now. We often find that people have an offence that they committed when they were a teenager or young adult, and what matters to us is how you have moved on and developed since that time. Lots of us did things as young adults that we now regret, but we can't change it. People with this in their life story can work well with young people who are beginning to make some bad choices in their lives, because they are able to talk to them about their own life experience. If you have been able to make good choices after making some bad ones, then that tells us about your resilience and determination, which are very valuable qualities in fostering.

There are some serious offences that will need to be talked through in detail with you, and these would generally be offences that involved violence or sexual offending, and sometimes, these offences would mean that you cannot be a foster carer. From our point of view, if you have any history of offences, it's best to tell us about that before we do the checks, and then there are no surprises along the way that need a big conversation before we can move forward.

The DBS process works most quickly when people have lived in the same place for a long time. When people have lived abroad for significant periods as an adult, then we may need to do some checks in the countries where you have lived.

If you are a smoker, you will not be able to care for children aged 5 and under, and we would ask that you, or any visitors who smoke, do so outside the house, so that the house remains a smoke free environment for children. The same applies to e-cigarettes and vaping.

If you have any pets living in your house, we need to be sure that they do not pose a risk or hazard to any child. As part of our assessment of you, we will also assess your pets to make sure that their behaviour is manageable and that they are not aggressive. If a child has an allergy to some pets, then we would not want to place them with you, but there may be other times when the pet's access to some parts of the house will need to be restricted for some children.

Anyone who wants to be a foster carer has to have a medical so that we are sure that there is no medical vulnerability that would make fostering difficult, or that we need to take account of when we are thinking about which children could be placed with you. As with a DBS check, it's best if you tell us about anything that you think may come up in a medical, so that we have plenty of time to talk this through with you.

We don't mind whether you own your home, or you rent it. What's important to us is that you are secure in your tenancy and that you aren't going to be evicted or lose your home.

We will pay you a fee above the National minimum rate for foster carers that reflects your experience and the types of placements that you are approved to take. We will also provide you with an allowance for each child that is placed with you, some local authorities only provide one allowance regardless of how many children or young people you care for.



Working for a brighter future together

Key Decision N

Date First
Published: N/A

DECISION REPORT

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 30 March 2021

Report Title: Cared for Children Education Update

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

Senior Officer: Laura Rogerson, Virtual School Headteacher

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report will provide an update on education for cared for children and the support from the Virtual School since the restrictions of Covid-19 came into force, in particular during the recent lockdown in January 2021. This report also highlights the progress in planning for children and young people as we approach the full return to education.

2. Recommendation/s

2.1 Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of the report.
- Provide support and challenge to the local authority actions in respect of the report.

3. Reasons for Recommendation/s

- 3.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is an advisory group to the Cabinet and, as such, needs to be aware of any national or local issues that are likely to impact on cared for children and care leavers. The Corporate Parenting

Committee needs to be able to scrutinise and challenge performance to improve outcomes for cared for children and young people and care leavers.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 None; this is an update report.

5. Background

- 5.1. The report provides an update on education for cared for children to the Corporate Parenting Committee as requested in the last meeting. The last report (the Virtual School Headteachers report) was presented in November 2020.
- 5.2. The educational experience of our cared for children has continued to be a priority. Robust measures remained in place to track vulnerable pupils not attending school during the recent lockdown. Close partnership links and communication has remained in place between education and social care to ensure support was in place where needed/ required by children, young people and families/ carers.

6. Education Update for Cared for Children

- 6.1. There are currently 363 cared for children aged 5-16 years in Cheshire East.
- 6.2. The Virtual School has continued to support attendance and education provision for all children. The virtual school advisors have been linking with schools, carers, children and young people, and social workers to keep them updated and offer support where needed. The specialist attendance officers, and virtual school advisors have made contact with all children and young people who have not been accessing school during the recent lockdown to discuss remote learning and current support/ access to education. We have created a temporary support plan document to ensure we have a record of contact and detail of remote learning packages in place. As part of this contact, we have also been collecting children's views and ensuring support is in place where required. The Virtual School has ensured communication with social care has been maintained throughout. Virtual School Advisors have supported with access to school places where needed and/ or requested by social workers, parents or carers.
- 6.3. ***The current cumulative attendance*** September 2020 – February 2021 is 81%.
- 6.4. ***Attendance during the recent lockdown*** January 2021 to February 2021 is 56%:
- Monthly attendance for January 2021 is 54%

- Monthly attendance for February 2021 is 61%.
- 6.5. The Virtual School has continued to focus on completion and quality of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) to ensure that we continue to have high aspirations for our children and young people. We have led a series of virtual training sessions with schools and social care over the past 6 months with a focus on completing PEPs and improving quality to support educational outcomes and how to support the full return to school.
- 6.6. ***Current completion rate of PEPs Sept 2020 to Feb 2021:***
- Age 5-16 years - 365 children in total 90% of PEPs completed
 - Post 16 - 90 children in total 97% of PEPs completed.
- 6.7. The Virtual School Governing Body was launched in February 2021. The Director of Children's Social Care is the Chair of Governors. Core members include representatives from across all partners including schools and carers. This governing body will allow the Virtual School to have the same level of support, scrutiny and challenge that would exist within mainstream and specialist provision and will provide an additional avenue to challenge our statutory responsibilities and outcomes for children and young people, as well as also monitor and support the longer term consequences of the pandemic.
- 6.8. To further embed the culture of TOGETHER we are working with the participation team to introduce a student council that will be introduced and developed throughout the next 12 months to ensure our children and young people are working in coproduction with us to further develop the service and support we offer as a Virtual School.
- 6.9. Since the first lockdown to support our children and families we created an education guide with information and links (including those published by the DfE) to support with signposting to support for mental health and wellbeing and education/ academic resources. Age related guides were created for Early Years and Primary, Secondary and post 16, these has been shared with social care to send directly to carers and have been posted on our website.
- 6.10. A One Minute Guide has been created with how to complete PEPs virtually to ensure that there is clear planning for return to full education and any gaps in learning and support, this has been shared with settings/social care and placed on our website.
- 6.11. The Virtual School has used Pupil Premium funding to ensure all children and young people have access to digital devices including support for devices for our post 16 cared for young people and care leavers. The

Virtual School were kindly donated 15 iPad that were reallocated from council members, these have been issued to children. We have continued to fund additional tutoring to ensure that targeted intervention and support (virtually) has been able to continue for our children throughout the lockdown. We collect termly attainment data from our schools to allow us to continue to track and monitor the impact during this rest of the academic year.

- 6.12. The Virtual School Post 16 tutor has continued to work directly with young people to allow for continued access to English and Maths qualifications. He has supported some of our young people who have been struggling with remote/ online learning to catch up with outstanding work. He has provided additional ESOL (English Speakers as Other Languages) learning with those young people at college, or for those who are awaiting college places that have come into care mid-term. Some young people have successfully gained functional skills qualification since January lockdown through the support that the post 16 tutor has put in place.
- 6.13. NEET Programme: The Virtual School and the Care Leavers Team have run a NEET programme from October to January, this was a targeted intervention for NEET young people. Eight young people accessed the programme which included:
- Team Building activities
 - Employability workshops
 - Health relationship workshops
 - ASDAN qualification gained in Citizenship
 - Community project
 - CV writing
- 6.14 At the end of the programme, of the eight young people, two moved onto the Princes Trust programme, four moved onto a work based placement programme, one moved out of area and support has continued to be available through the Virtual School, and one remains NEET but actively applying for apprenticeships. The next programme is currently in development and due to start in April 2021. Due to success with engagement on the programme we are increasing the offer to 12 young people.
- 6.15 ***Current NEET figures as at February 2021:*** Year 12 & 13 - 117 in cohort: 15 young people NEET (12%) this has increased slightly by 8% (10 young people) since September, targeted support and intervention is in place for those young people to support with re-engagement. We now have a journey first worker identified to support our young people, they will be

working alongside the Virtual School and Care Leavers Team to offer further support and interventions for our NEET young people and those at risk of becoming NEET. This team meets monthly to track and monitor each young person and ensure clear actions and support are in place.

7. Implications of the Recommendations

7.1 Policy Implications

- 7.1.1 Cheshire East is ambitious and committed to ensuring it is a great place to be young. Our priorities are supported and driven through the Council's Corporate Plan, the Children and Young People's Plan and the Health and Wellbeing Strategic Plan. Our Corporate Parenting Strategy has a clear vision that our cared for children and care leavers are safe, happy, healthy and achieve their full potential.

7.2 Legal Implications

- 7.2.1 There are no legal implications.

7.3 Financial Implications

- 7.3.1 There are no financial implications or changes as a result of the recommendations of this report.

7.4 Equality Implications

- 7.4.1 Cared for children and care leavers can be a vulnerable group because of their experiences and so the impact of Covid-19 could mean further marginalisation.

7.5 Human Resources Implications

- 7.5.1 HR and Public Health have been supportive of officers in ensuring that robust risk assessments are in place and available to staff in undertaking their duties.

7.6 Risk Management Implications

- 7.6.1 Cared for children and care leavers are a vulnerable group that are at risk of a number of factors, including poor education and training, the Corporate Parenting Strategy prioritises these areas.

7.7 Rural Communities Implications

- 7.7.1 There are no direct rural communities' implications of this report.

7.8 Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

- 7.8.1 The contents of this report have implications for cared for children and care leavers, who are some of Cheshire East's most vulnerable children.

7.9 Public Health Implications

- 7.9.1 The impact of Covid-19 is well documented within this report.

7.10 Climate Change Implications

- 7.10.1 There is a commitment to ensure that Cheshire East cared for children live as close to their home community as possible, wherever this is safe to do so. This will ensure that children can continue to feel connected to their families and local community. It also reduces the geographical footprint of children, families and staff as travel is reduced.

8. Ward Members Affected

- 8.1 Although the number of Cheshire East cared for children and young people is relatively small, they are a vulnerable cohort, who live across Cheshire East and in other local authority areas.

9. Consultation & Engagement

- 9.1 My Voice, our cared for children council, continue to meet virtually on a weekly basis.

10. Access to Information

- 10.1 None.

11. Contact Information

- 11.1 Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

Name: Laura Rogerson
Job Title: Head of Service for SEND and Head of the Virtual School
Email: Laura.Rogerson@cheshireeast.gov.uk



Together we will make Cheshire East a great place to be young

Cheshire East Children and Young People's Sufficiency Statement for Cared for Children

2021-2023



Our Shared Ambition in Cheshire East is that:

Children and Young People are **valued as individuals** in their own right

Children and Young People **feel and are safe and protected**, free from fear and danger

Children and Young People are brought up and cared for within their own families wherever possible but **experience good care** where this is not the case

Children and Young People are **physically, mentally and emotionally healthy**

Children and Young People **enjoy their childhood** and youth and have a positive experience of social engagement with each other and their communities

Children and Young People have every **opportunity to achieve** and reach their potential and enjoy their school and learning experiences

Children and Young People **have a say in the services they receive** - and **see meaningful participation as their right**

Children, young people, their families and services **work together to meet individual needs** and problem solve, and support is based on their lived experience

Young People are supported into adulthood **able to shape their own destiny**

The borough **celebrates the successes and achievements** of all children and young people

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Foreword

We believe that through working together with our children, young people, families and partners, we will make Cheshire East a great place to be young. Our vision, **Together for Children and Young People**, sets out that we want Cheshire East to be a place where children and young people thrive, are safe from harm, feel physically and emotionally healthy, have access to outstanding education and feel prepared for and excited about adulthood.

We believe that:

- Children are best supported within their families and their communities.
- All children should enjoy the best education which prepares them to thrive in adulthood.
- Families and communities are strong and resilient with the right help, by the right people, at the right time.

The Cheshire East **Children and Young Peoples Plan** 2019-2021 was developed with young people within the children's trust and branded our approach as "**TOGETHER**".

We work extremely hard to make sure that the experience for all our children and young people is truly collaborative and that everything we do is focused on our belief that children are best placed within their families and communities. We have a strong Early Help and Prevention offer in place to support families to stay together, however there are a small number of children and young people whose families are unable to care for them or where it remains unsafe for a child to remain living within the family network. In these circumstances it is the Local Authority's responsibility to provide the very best care and support and achieve a route to permanence without delay.

When children and young people become cared for the local authority becomes the child's corporate parent, a role that we take with privilege and significance. Corporate parenting is a role that is very well understood throughout the council and where members and officers work together to offer high support and high challenge around the plans to provide excellent care and support and maintaining high aspirations for the futures of our children and young people.

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In Cheshire East our children and young people are clear that they wish to be described in the terms 'cared for children' and 'care leavers'.

All children are unique; children who come into care even more so with needs and circumstances each requiring an individual, tailored care plan. As Corporate Parents it is our collective responsibility to ensure that we understand what these needs are and that we have the skills, knowledge and resources to meet those needs. We believe that children's needs are best met when they can continue to be connected to their family, friend and communities and plan to be able to offer this level of sufficiency in borough.

The purpose of this sufficiency statement is to set out the current provision which is underpinned by our analysis of the presenting need and to set a clear work plan and trajectory around how we will achieve greater sufficiency in the areas that we know are most required to meet the individual needs of our children and young people. We will ensure that the approach is flexible, diverse and most importantly is influenced by what our children and young people tell us.

Introduction

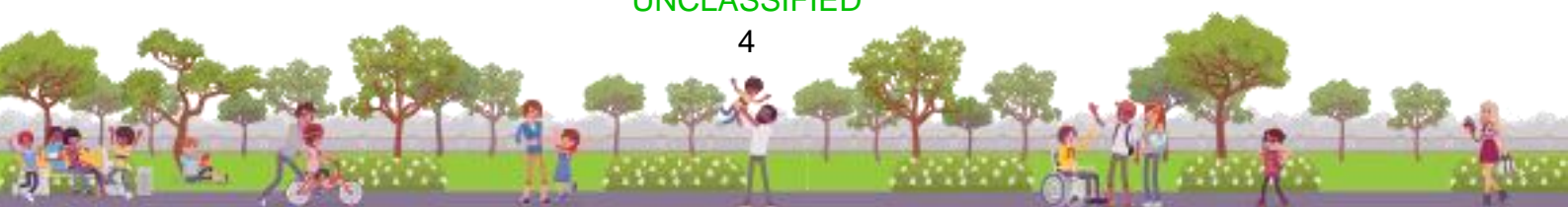
The majority of children are brought up in their own families, but for a small number of children circumstances may dictate the need to grow up in alternative settings which can include care by alternative family members, foster care, residential care, adoptive homes and supported independent living.

We are clear about the need to secure permanency for children and young people as a matter of urgency and therefore recognize the need to generate enough sufficiency in the right places.

No one service or provider can by itself provide all the support needed by cared for children and care leavers. It requires all services and agencies to take a shared responsibility to meeting the needs of our children, young people and care experienced adults as an effective corporate parenting body.

Local Authorities are required, under s22G of the Children Act 1989, to publish an annual Sufficiency Statement for children in care however as an authority we recognize the importance and usefulness of a clear strategy that the service and partnership can work towards.

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Cheshire East's Cared for Children and Care Leavers Corporate Parenting Strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan set out the principles by which agencies and services in Cheshire East will ensure that cared for children have the same opportunities as their peers to enable them to fulfil their potential and make a good start in adult life. It sets out the achievements so far, shared priorities for children and young people in care, and the actions to be taken to make a positive difference to their lives.

As corporate parents we have high aspirations for our children and young people in and encourage them to have high aspirations for themselves. We want them to transition to adulthood with a sense of achievement and security, looking forward to a future where they will be valued and involved citizens who are economically independent and able to contribute positively to the communities in which they live.

Our Corporate Parenting Strategy details five outcomes for which we can measure progress to ensure we are all working as hard as possible to ensure children and young people feel supported, encouraged and hopeful; these outcomes are in the words of our cared for children and care leavers:

- Involve Me
- Providing me with a Good Safe Home
- Keep Me Healthy
- Help Me to Achieve
- Support Me to Move to Adult Life

Each outcome has priorities and detailed actions of what needs to be achieved to meet each outcome; the voice of children and young people is central to the Corporate Parenting Strategy and informs this Sufficiency Statement.

The Sufficiency Duty for Children in Care

The Statutory Guidance sets out a requirement for Local Authorities to work with key partners to be in a position to secure, where reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for children in care in their local authority area which meets the needs of children and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area ('the sufficiency duty').

The sufficiency duty requires local authorities to do more than simply ensure that accommodation be 'sufficient' in terms of the number of beds provided. They must also

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have a regard to the benefits of securing a number of providers and a range of services. Fundamentally, the accommodation available must meet the needs of children. To achieve this, Cheshire East's Children's Commissioning Team follow the commissioning cycle of analyse, plan, do, review. A wealth of data is used to inform our analysis including the quarterly Cared for Children Monitoring Reports and Placements North West census. We do not rely solely on data, the biggest contribution to our analysis is the feedback from our children and young people and our partners / professionals. The views and aspirations of our young people are instrumental to our planning, delivery and achieving outcomes.

TOGETHER is our shared definition of coproduction in Cheshire East because it's inclusive to all:

- Teamwork
- Open-minded ideas and discussions
- Genuine communication for all partners
- Equal partners help to shape and improve support for all
- Trust each other to make the right decisions
- Honest
- Engage and empower children, young people, adults and families
- Respect for everyone's views and opinions

Our **TOGETHER** values and commitment:

We will:

- Listen to your views
- Communicate honestly
- Trust each other
- Be person centered
- Adapt to people's needs
- Respect and value all opinions
- Do what we say we will

We won't:

- Use jargon or acronyms
- Give too much information
- Rush meetings

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- Take too long to complete our actions
- Be judgmental

There are **standards of excellence** set out in the 1989 Children's Act for the sufficiency duty:

- All children are placed in the local authority area, except where this is not consistent with their needs and welfare
- All children with adoption recommendations are placed with an adoptive family within 12 months of that recommendation
- There is a diverse range of universal, targeted and specialist services working together to meet children's needs, including children and young people who are already looked after, as well as those at risk of care or custody
- Children's Trust partners, including housing, work together to secure a range of provision to meet the needs of those who become looked after at the age of 16 and 17, and support the continuity of accommodation beyond the age of 18
- Services are available in adequate quantity to respond to children and young people, including predicted demand for a range of needs, and emergencies
- In addition to meeting relevant National Minimum Standards, services are of high enough quality to secure the specific outcomes identified in the care planning process for children and young people
- Services are situated across the local authority area to reflect the geographical distribution of need
- Providers of homes for children (including private, voluntary and public sector providers) are linked into the wider network of services and work with these services to offer appropriate support to deliver identified outcomes for looked after children
- Universal services know when a child or young person is looked after and have good links with the range of targeted and specialist services which support them, including providers of homes for children
- There are mechanisms in place to ensure that professionals involved in home and family finding decisions have sufficient knowledge and information about the supply and quality of homes for children and availability of all specialist, targeted and universal support services within the local authority area
- The local authority and its Children's Trust partners collaborate with neighbouring Children's Trusts to plan the market for services for looked after children and commission in regional or sub-regional arrangements

This sufficiency statement sets out how Cheshire East has met these standards and currently working towards developing them further.

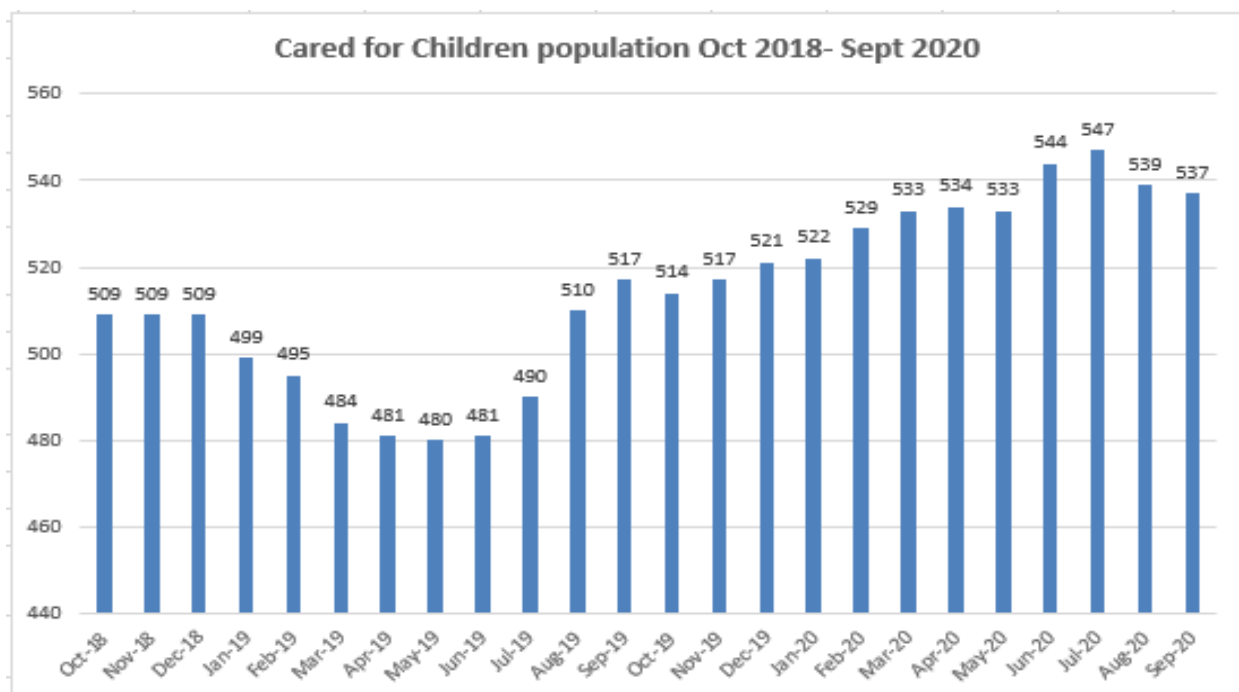
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Demand for Local Accommodation and Support

The data published by Placements North West showed that as of 31st December 2019; the average number of cared for children per authority in the north west region was 637 with Cheshire East having a total of 521 children on that date. We have seen a 10% increase in the number of cared for children over the last year and as of 31st March 2020, we had a total of 533 children in care.

Similar to the National trend in increasing numbers of cared for Children and Young People, our own numbers of cared for children have also risen. we are confident that for these cared for children and young people, that they are in the right environment that will best meet their needs; the highest reason for removing children from their family home continues to be abuse and long-term neglect. We have seen an increase in the local child/ young person population and this, alongside national drivers and a change in culture and practice, we believe contributes to the pressure on care for children numbers.



We continue to see an increase in young people aged 11 to 15 who are cared for. It has become more difficult to find homes for children in this age group both locally and

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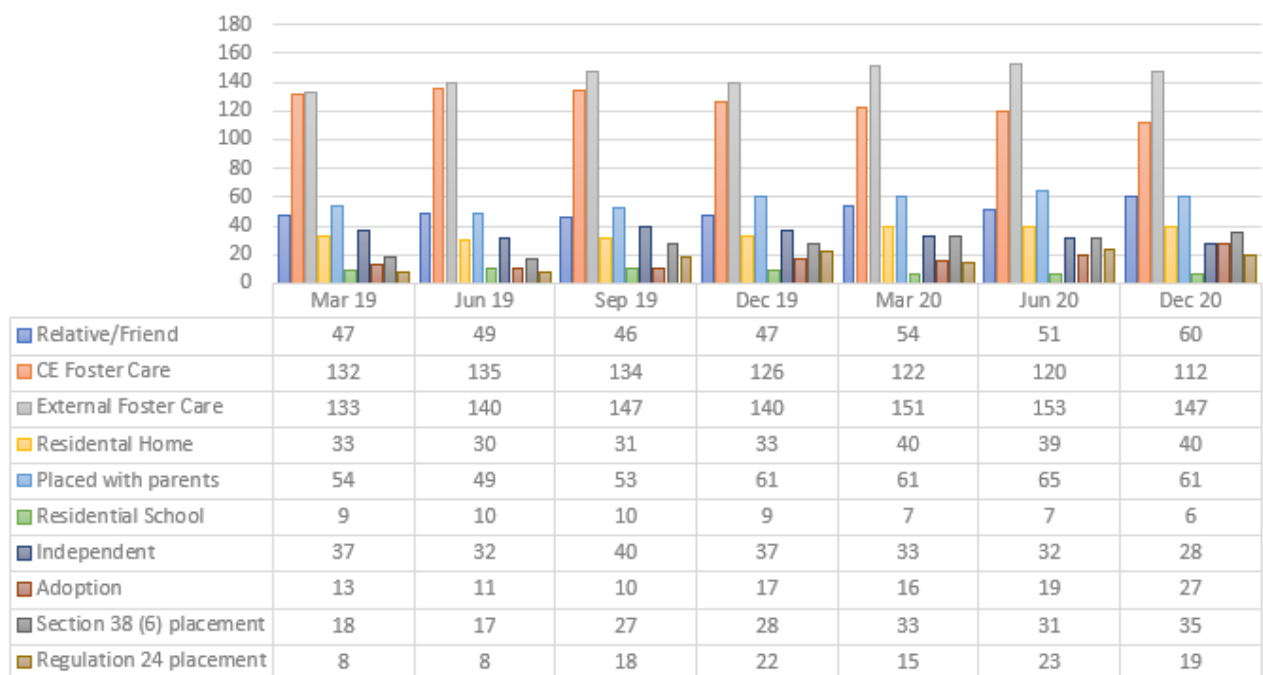


regionally. As of 30th September 2020, this was our largest age group with 37% of our young people in this category; this is just below the national average of 39%.

Age range of cared for children

Age band	31 Dec 2019	31 Jan 2020	29 Feb 2020	31 Mar 2020	30 Jun 2020	30 Sep 2020
0 to 4	103	107	110	106	108	105
5 to 10	118	121	122	124	123	128
11 to 15	178	179	183	186	199	198
16+	122	115	114	117	114	106
Total	521	522	529	533	544	537

Cared for Population by type of home currently living in at quarter end (Mar 19 - Sep 20)



The table above shows the cared for population by type of home each child was living in at the end of the last 7 quarters. There can also be a small number of individuals in other placements such as hospitals or secure accommodation.

**A family and friends carer is a family member, friend or other person connected to the child that has been assessed and approved as a foster carer specifically for that child. The numbers include those placed with family members temporarily whilst assessment is ongoing.*

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The main reason for entering care continues to be due to abuse or neglect with 0-4 year olds continuing to account for around 1 in 3 of every admission.

Reasons for admission in to care

April 2019 – March 2020						April 2020 – Sep 2020					
Admission reason	0 to 4	5 to 10	11 to 15	16+	Total	Admission reason	0 to 4	5 to 10	11 to 15	16+	Total
Abuse or neglect	61	38	44	15	158	Abuse or neglect	20	9	18	6	53
Disability	0	0	0	1	1	Disability	0	2	1	0	3
Parental illness/disability	0	0	0	0	0	Parental illness/disability	0	1	0	0	1
Family in acute stress	2	1	2	6	11	Family in acute stress	0	0	2	0	2
Family dysfunctional	1	1	0	1	3	Family dysfunctional	1	0	0	0	1
Socially unacceptable behaviour	0	0	0	0	0	Socially unacceptable behaviour	0	0	0	0	0
Absent parenting	1	0	3	5	9	Absent parenting	0	1	0	4	5
Total	65	40	49	28	182	Total	21	13	21	10	65

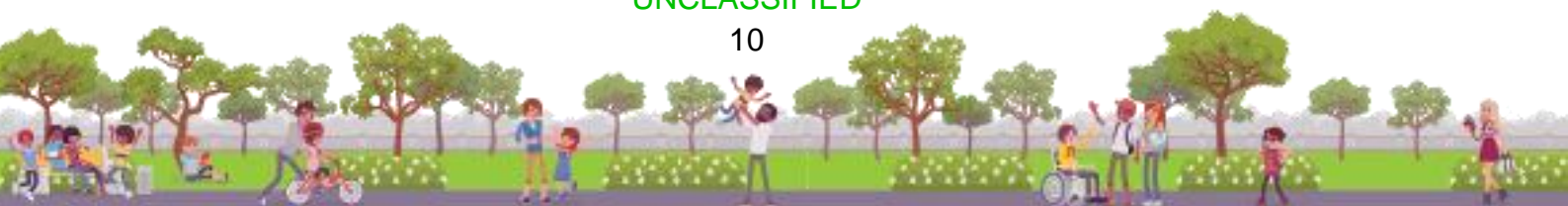
Keeping children and young people safe is paramount; this begins with our Early Help offer. Supporting families to stay together with the help they need to maintain this. Our weekly Resource and Permanency Panel (RAPP) has strengthened this approach with challenge and support given to colleagues to consider and resource alternative solutions that align to our belief that children's needs are best met within their family and community.

Child Protection

As of 31st March 2020, the total number of children subject to a child protection plan was 253 which is below the north west average of 343. The main category of abuse continues to be neglect.

Year	Total number of children	Neglect	Physical Abuse	Sexual Abuse	Emotional Abuse
31-Mar-20	253	195	13	23	22
31-Mar-19	268	166	35	25	42
31-Mar-18	286	133	61	18	74
31-Mar-17	275	135	46	26	68

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Children in Need

As of 31st March 2020, the total number of children in need was 2106 which is in line with the same point in the previous year and is below the north west average of 2525. Due to the range of numbers in the NW ranging from 1007 – 8502 depending on authority, the rate per 10,000 helps to provide further context. CE rate was 272.5 compared to the NW average of 371.5. The rate across the NW ranges from 251.3 in Trafford to 717.8 in Blackpool 9% of those children in 2020 were recorded as having a disability.

Number of children in need

Year	Total number of children
31-Mar-20	2106
31-Mar-19	2108
31-Mar-18	2182
31-Mar-17	1974

Children with Disabilities

The Children with Disabilities Social Work Team are currently working with 150 disabled children and young people. 125 of these are subject to ongoing assessment or Child in Plans delivering specific support. The remaining 25 children are 'cared for', 1 having recently been placed for adoption, 12 within residential provision, most of which includes education on site, 2 are living with family and friends foster carers and 10 are living with mainstream foster carers, either with in-house foster carers or Independent Foster Agencies. In line with the focus on increasing numbers of in-house foster carers (described further in this document), we are also embarking on a specific targeted recruitment campaign to increase our number of specialist in-house short break foster carers for disabled children by 6 over the next 3 years.

Standards of excellence - All children are placed in the local authority area, except where this is not consistent with their needs and welfare

At a Distance

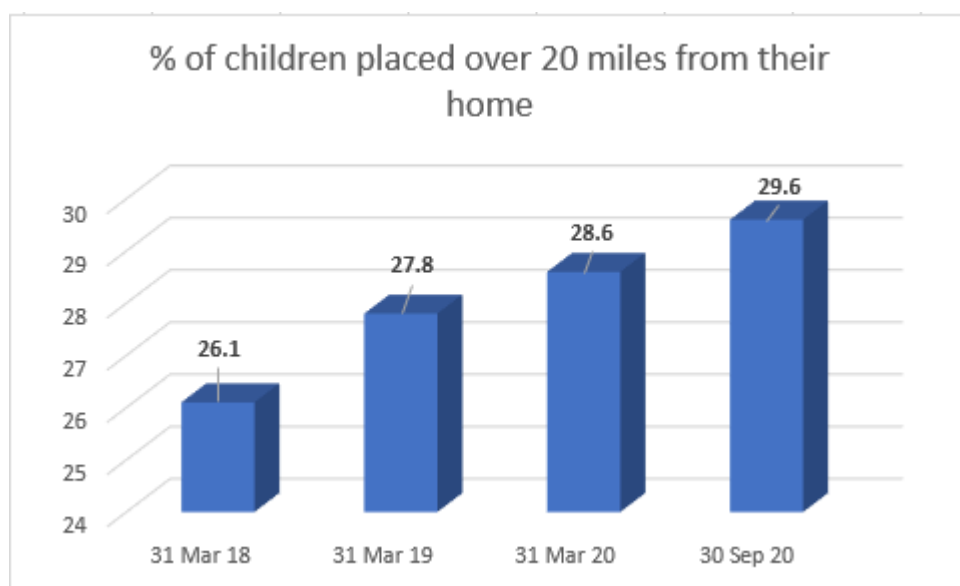
The number of children placed beyond a 20 mile radius from their home address at point of entering care has risen slightly in the past three years (see figures below). As of 30th September 2020, we had 29.6% of children placed beyond a 20-mile radius

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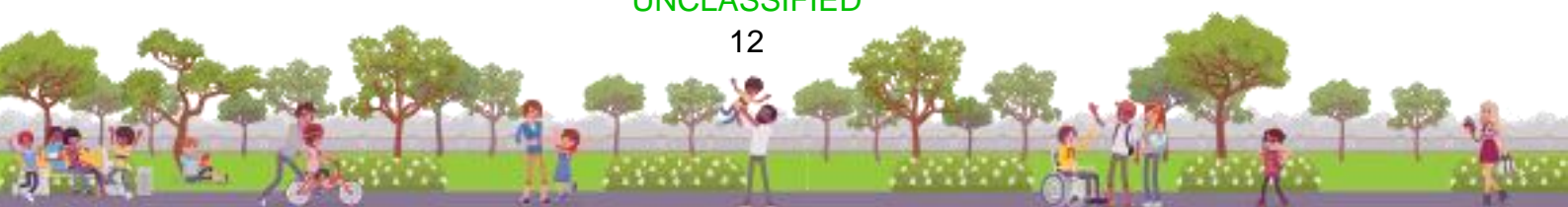
(this does not include children placed for adoption, UASC and those living with parents or relatives). Some of these children will still be placed in Cheshire East and some placed outside Cheshire East will still be close to family networks. The target is to reduce from 29.6 % to 20% and to better understand the rationale for those placed at distance from the authority. Analysis is consistently undertaken to understand the homes for children decision, presenting need and any gaps in local provision that would have supported a home closer to the young person's home community.

For those young people who are placed further away there is robust evidence provided in the homes for children approval request to demonstrate why that home best meets need which is endorsed by the Director of Children's Social Care. However, for some children it is necessary for them to be placed a distance from their home setting due to being placed for adoption or within a family placement, safeguarding concerns or to accommodate significant levels of need. Where this is required, we work closely with the host authority to ensure there are the right support and services available within that area and that there are clear strategies around Missing from Home, Child Sexual Exploitation and that it has a strong safeguarding children's partnerships arrangements in place that supports local providers. The ILAC inspection 2019 found that children needs were not compromised by being placed at a distance.



All young people that are placed at a distance from Cheshire East (in an authority that does not share a border) have approval from the Director of Children's Services.

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When analysing the current cared for children population and their hometown prior to coming into care the majority of our cared for children come from the Crewe and Macclesfield areas. This geographical mapping of the communities from which our cared for children originate has, influenced the early help strategy and the spread of accommodation that is required; be that through the residential redesign, additional supported living properties or foster carers.

The level of cared for children accommodation within Cheshire East boundaries at 31 December 2020 is detailed in the tables below:

Residential – Children’s Homes

Internal - Commissioned service	12 beds
External - Private provision	61 beds
External - Residential School provision	24 beds

Fostering – Placements

Cheshire East households	159
Independent Fostering Agency households	71

Independent Living 16+

Internal - Commissioned service	26 beds
External - Private provision	Approx. 28 beds

The above position provides a clear picture that for residential and Independent Living for 16 and 17 year olds sufficiency is appropriate and should cover demand outside of those young people were matching to other young people is a barrier and complex needs is also a factor. A clear sufficiency gap is apparent for Cheshire East foster carers and this is dealt with via analysis and actions within this statement.

It is recognised that our local providers, both Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) and residential providers, accommodate a large proportion of young people from other local authorities. We have been working with providers to target recruitment within Cheshire East and to have greater communication and strengthen existing relationships to ensure first choice on local provision.

Achievements and plans

Achievements from 2018- 2020:

- Our four bespoke children’s homes have opened in Crewe and Macclesfield

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- We have worked with local providers to enable much closer working; knowing in advance what vacancies are coming up and what the matching considerations will be.
- We continue to improve the recruitment of Cheshire East (CE) foster carers and have worked with IFA's to encourage targeted recruitment within CE and have seen local recruitment growth for some of our more specialist IFA's
- We initiated and began the implementation phase of our first Mockingbird Constellation
- We have Short Breaks providers working with us to look at the opportunities for more closer working
- Strengthened relationship and coproduce service design with foster carers to enhance the offer to foster carers
- Successfully achieved adoption for children out of borough, thus achieving their permanency plan in a timely way

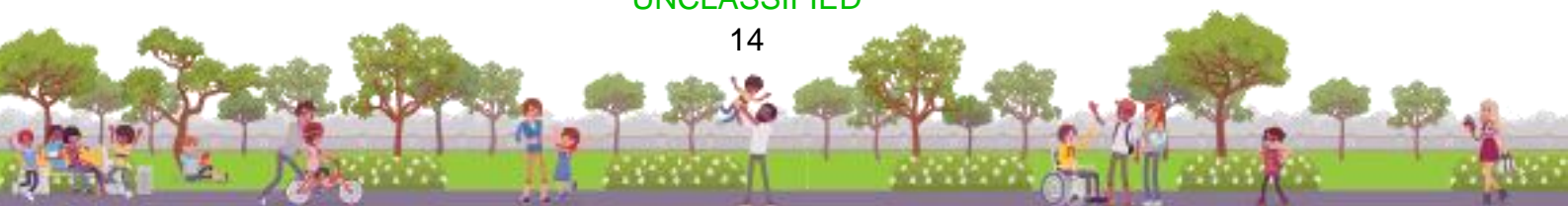
Plans for 2021 - 2023:

- Make significant strides in our recruitment and retention of internal foster carers through our new fostering brand and recruitment and marketing strategy
- Redesign our edge of care support structures / resources
- Relaunch our Neglect Strategy across the Partnership to support children remaining safely in their own families and receiving the right intervention at the right level.
- Establish a new Mother and Baby home in Crewe
- Mobilise our re-commission of supported accommodation and independent living (increased units of accommodation from 22 to 26 and build a stock of forever homes for our care leavers)
- Continue to market shape and undertake procurement activity to further develop local provision
- Put in place a Home-based Care Framework for children with a disability in order to strengthen the support at home rather than needs escalating and requiring more specialist services (sometimes out of borough)

Fostering

Cheshire East continues its drive to recruit and retain a diverse range of foster carers. We have recently undertaken an independent review of our fostering service.

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Following on from the independent review, we made the decision to leave the Foster4 collaboration (a fostering agency recruiting carers on behalf of the four Cheshire local



authorities: Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Halton Borough Council and Warrington Borough Council) and launched our own 'Together for Fostering' brand on the 1st September 2020.

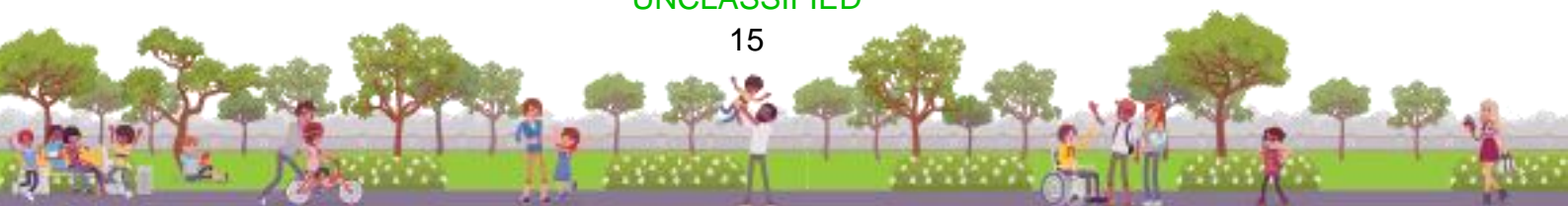
Since the 1st September 2020 we have developed several marketing and advertising routes to encourage recruitment of foster carers for Cheshire East, this has included radio and bus service advertisement, a heightened online presence through Instagram and Facebook, the development of a new website and a to mail drop every household within Cheshire East.

We have already seen some encouraging developments as a result of this. We currently (Dec 2020) have 14 assessments underway and another 3 formal applications being progressed. We have 6 Initial Visits organized for new expressions of interest. From now through to Christmas 2020 we will be approving a further 6 fostering households. We really seem to be building on progress, with each month being better than the last and this will be taken through to 2021 - 23.

In ensuring that we provide permanency options for our cared for children within foster placements we do not differentiate between in-house and IFA provision within our Agency Decision Making. We currently have 52 children long-term matched with in-house foster carers, 55 children long-term matched with IFA foster carers and a further 28 long-term matched with family and friends / connected carers. Whilst this ensures positive permanency for those children and young people in matched homes, for some foster carers it means that the ability to place with them in the future is removed until such a time that the child their care for progresses through to independence.

In addition to the recruitment and marketing activity in November 2020 we launched our first Mockingbird constellation, having successfully recruited to the 'home hub carer' role and have identified the fostering households that will start the first constellation within Alsager. Over the next 12 months we will be developing our second

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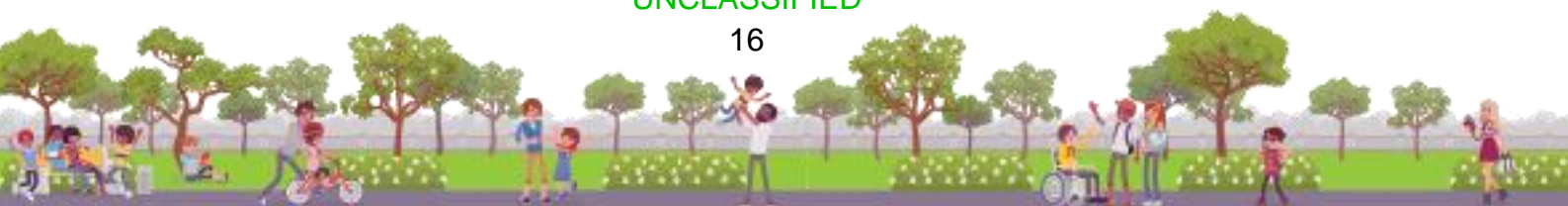
constellation with a commitment to the ongoing sustainability of developing further constellations as we progress through the coming years.

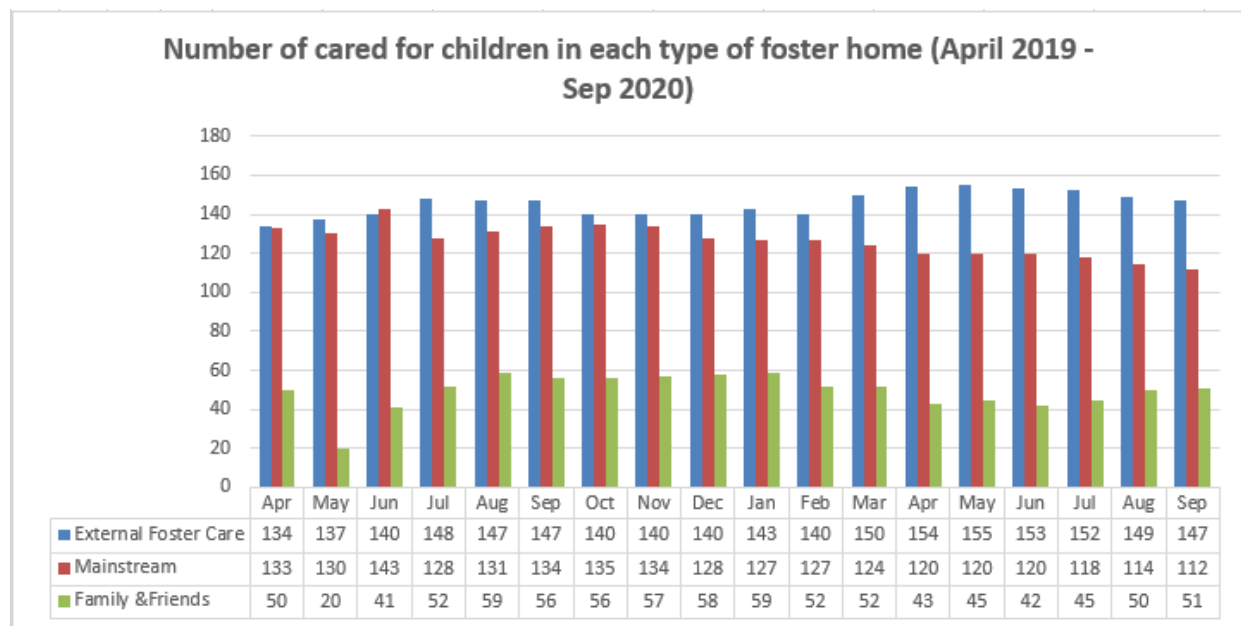
Over the next three years we will be developing and recruiting to a team of at least 6 specialist salaried foster carers who will care for our most complex children and young people. Whilst these specific carers will continue to be supervised and supported via the fostering service, it is our aim to align these foster carers with 'Bespoke' and specifically with the therapeutic interventions delivered through the Children and Families Support Team to focus on providing opportunity for children and young people to exit residential care or to support them to return to the care of their existing families, whether that be with their parent/s or wider family members.

Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) continue to provide care to high number of our cared for children and are an important resource in providing homes for our young people. As of 31st December 2019, we had 144 children living with IFA carers (30% of our cared for population); this is above the regional average of 18%. We maintain a close working relationship with IFAs and in 2019 we held a workshop with providers to discuss our young people waiting for long term families; this was helpful in securing a home for one of our young people. We plan to host the workshops regularly. Cheshire East accesses the North West Fostering framework; this provides greater value for money and core standards that are consistent across the region.

Having defined all we are going to do to increase our own numbers of mainstream and specialist foster carers, we acknowledge that there will be situations where we will need to place a child or young person within an IFA provision. To ensure that we have the best opportunity to keep those children and young people close to their local communities we will be looking to develop closer relationships and improved contacting arrangements with those IFA's situated closest to Cheshire East.

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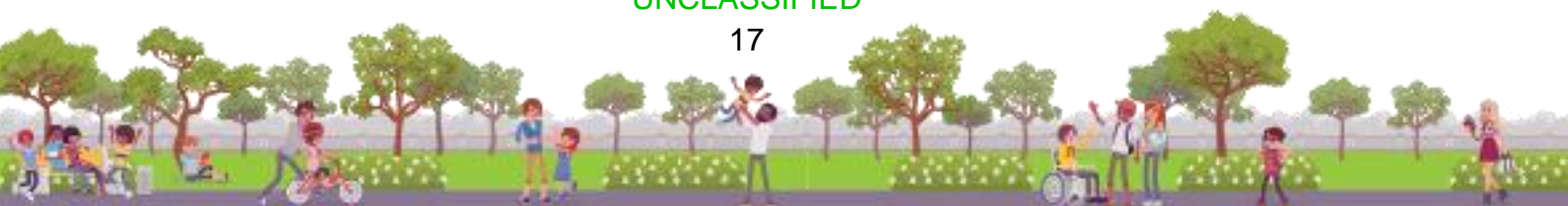
As of March 2020, 10% of our children and young people were placed with family and friends foster carers; this has decreased from the previous year and is below the national average of 13%.

Achievements and plans

Achievements from 2018 - 2020:

- Forged relationships with new and existing providers
- Worked more closely with other local authorities across the region
- We consulted on and increased our foster carers fees and provided elements of future proofing fee increases by aligning this to the annual NJC awards
- We have developed a 'SharePoint' site for our foster carers to enable them to access all fostering based information and expense claims online
- Promotion of simpler payments scheme and guaranteed retainers for newly approved carers awaiting matching
- Launched our first Mockingbird constellation, having successfully recruited to the 'home hub carer' role and have identified the fostering households that will start the first constellation within Alsager.
- Reduction in assessment time between 16-18 weeks and further collaboration with our North West partners to consolidate the reduction in assessment time across NW and increase the numbers of inquiries translated to approvals

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- Comprehensive training and development for foster carers from pre-approval through to specialist skill development for particular needs of the child
- Development of our Fostering Plus Scheme to attract foster carers who can be supported to develop specialist skills
- Developed our own marketing and recruitment capacity
- Covid response

Plans for 2021 - 2023:

- Increase the net availability of internal foster carers (with a specific focus on parent and child foster carers, teenagers, siblings and children with a disability)
- Increase the number of in-house foster carers to a point where we achieve a net gain of 30 foster carers year on year over the coming years
- Increase the number of foster carers who can provide short break provision for children with disabilities by 6
- To develop and recruit a team of at least 6 specialist salaried foster carers to work with our most complex children and young people
- Develop a foster care program directly linked to 'Bespoke' to facilitate stepping out of residential provision
- Increase the emergency provision offer
- Develop remand foster care provision
- Launch second Mockingbird constellation and continue to build further constellations across the authority
- Reduce the number of children coming in to care by reviewing the Care at Home offer
- Continue to be ambitious corporate parents and provide care that achieves excellent outcomes

Residential

As of 31st March 2020, there were 533 children and young people who were cared for with around 9% placed in residential children's homes; this is on par with the regional average of 9%. Whilst this is an increase from the previous year it is evidence of the targeted work to ensure each young person is in a home that best meets their needs. RAPP ensures all homes for children decisions are made following a process of support and challenge, ensuring the home is working to meet the desired outcome – be that returning home or 'stepping down' to foster care provision. In addition to finding

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homes for children, it is within the Terms of Reference for RAPP to review existing homes for children.

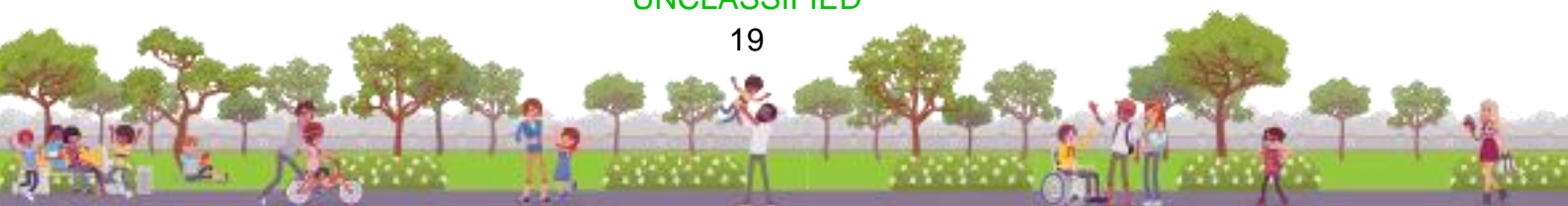
Cheshire East now has four of its own commissioned children's homes located in the borough as an integral part of our Bespoke approach. There is still a requirement for children to be placed in external residential homes and we have access to the North West residential framework which is an excellent resource in providing homes for children and young people. We have a good working relationship with homes in the Cheshire East area and they are invited to our monthly CHAPS meetings with the police which discusses any issues in the area which may affect our young people.

Commissioners work in partnership with Placements Northwest, liaise with local providers and new providers seeking to establish provision within the Cheshire East boundary. Through ongoing work, we have been able to shape the market and will continue to do so to ensure we are meeting the needs of the population. By building good working relationships, as early as possible we can influence quality of care and seek to gain the most efficient offer, achieving best value for our cared for children and young people.

The Bespoke Project

By the time that Sir Martin Narey had published his independent review into children's residential care in 2016 we had already begun to consider what a recommissioned in-house service might look like and these thoughts were refined and developed following further research and visits by some of our senior team to the No Wrong Door Project in North Yorkshire. We are confident that this 'Care Hub' approach will not only see the return of some of our most complex and furthest placed children to their local communities but will ultimately provide us with a wide range of services that will have an impact on children beyond those who will actually live in the homes. For example, it will contribute to work in the Fostering Service to improve placement stability and support for carers, and will lead to the development of more specialised fostering to focus on 'step down' placements from our homes; we are also confident that it will enhance the excellent work that Ofsted has recognised in our 'Edge of Care' services. However, we always knew that none of these developments would be possible unless the homes themselves were mobilised properly, with time allowed for registered managers, staff teams and young people to settle into their new caring relationships and establish a baseline level of stability. In each case therefore as our homes have opened, we agreed with our partners that the first and second admissions to the homes

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would follow each other relatively quickly, and that there would then be a period of consolidation before a third young person was considered for any of the groups.

When looking at potential referrals to the Bespoke homes, it is important to remember that not all of our children in residential care can be considered. Of the 45/46 that we generally have at any one time perhaps 11 or 12 will be Children with Disabilities who are in specialist placements joint funded with Health; another group will be children with complex needs who have finally found some stability and whom it would be unwise to move; still others will have only recently been placed or are in Court proceedings and therefore to think about moving them again would not be reasonable. What this means in practice is it is likely that only around half of the children in residential placements can actively be considered for Bespoke, before any of the other multiple factors such as geography, matching and education arrangements start to be applied.

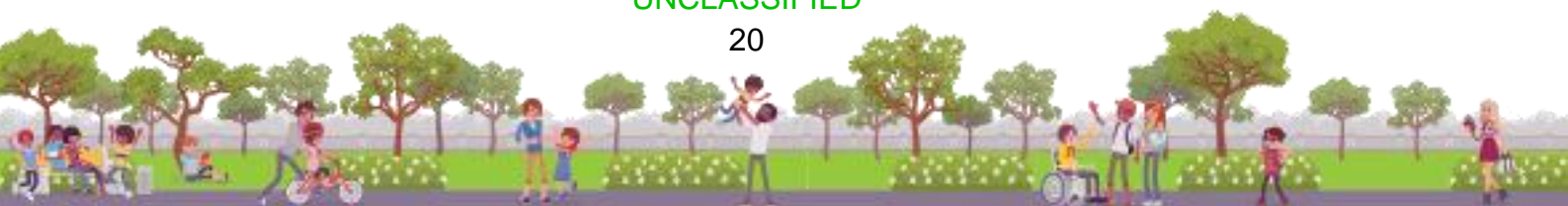
Fundamentally, moving children at all is difficult, and we have always acknowledged that moving specific ones into individually matched placements within tight timescales requires the most careful planning and engagement.

Detailed admission planning started as long ago as June 2019 when discussions with some of our young people, their social workers, team managers and IROs identified an initial group of fourteen children as potential admissions. In mid-January of this year we were able to welcome one of them, our furthest placed child, into Malbanc House in a well-planned move on the day after it was first registered, and by early June all four of our homes had been mobilised.

The Bespoke Therapeutic Team

Cheshire East Children's Services is fortunate in that at a time of severe financial pressure on the activity of local authorities, we have been able to retain a non-statutory but nevertheless essential therapeutic social work team, the Children & Families Support Team. This service comprises a highly experienced manager, three specially trained social workers, two family support workers and a seconded CAMHS worker, and exists to promote and support placement stability through enhanced emotional well-being and mental health. In the past two years, we have made significant changes to the operation of the service and in general terms, we have moved away from offering direct sessions of individual therapy to children to working with carers and residential workers in understanding behaviour and developing strategies to address it. Whilst there will always be a place for direct therapeutic work with children, there is a danger that the child can experience these interventions in terms of having to accept personal responsibility, both for their difficulties and in finding the solutions to them; in turn, the

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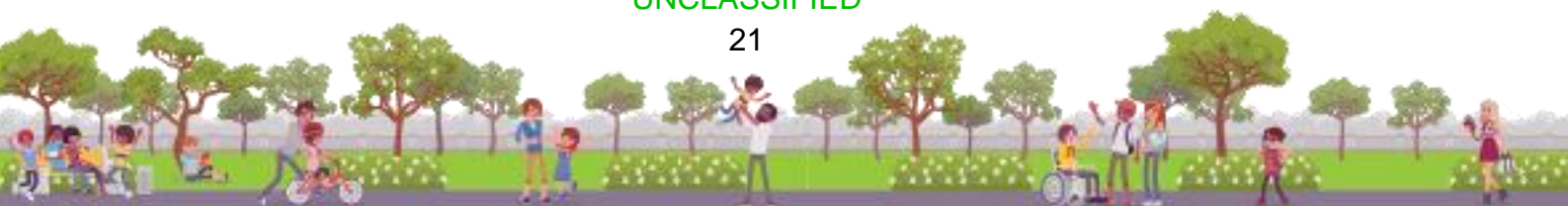
expectation that can be created from families (and indeed far too frequently from professionals) is that the child can be 'fixed'. The C&FST will become the base for a virtual therapeutic team around the Bespoke Project that will operate within the broad parameters of the team's Statement of Purpose and which has been recently updated and revised. At the present time, we have the following resources that can be deployed to work with the young people and staff in the Bespoke Homes:

- The Children and Families Support Team as above
- The in-house resources of the two providers
- Two Speech & Language Therapists working one day a week each north and south
- In time, it may be possible to bring in other disciplines, either on a sessional basis as required, by attracting additional funding if we can, or by using any opportunities created by turnover to recruit differently; in particular, the introduction of Sensory O/T would prove an invaluable addition to the project

The principle focus of the team will inevitably fall on the young people who live in our homes and include:

- Placement Stability, what we have previously described as the single most important Key Performance Indicator for our Cared For Children; if children are stable in their homes, it is likely that they will be doing well on any of the other measures that we might wish to apply.
- Potential admissions to residential care / Edge of Care work: we have a number of children who are living in residential care because at the point at which they required an urgent placement, we were unable to identify a suitably matched foster family for them. Our hope is that the expertise within the Bespoke Team can be used to support families in these circumstances for long enough to enable a successful search for a foster placement to be made. This work will involve working alongside @CT, our Edge of Care Team who will provide direct support and time out to young people and their families.
- Preparation for foster care: we will work with potential carers to provide a comprehensive understanding of the child's attachments and behaviours and developing strategies to address them; at Victoria Lodge in particular, which we envisage will be the principle home for this work, this may involve bringing carers in to work alongside staff in the same way as North Yorkshire's No Wrong Door Model.

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- Supporting agency transfers to Bespoke: staff will work directly with other providers where appropriate to bring young people back to placements in Cheshire East.
- Leaving care: young people leaving residential care are an especially vulnerable group who are often over-represented in too many of our adverse indicators. The Bespoke Therapeutic Team will play a key role in supporting young people in developing plans to move on, particularly where this involves rehabilitation to family members.

Children with disability residential short break

The level of good quality, value for money residential short break provision that is available within Cheshire East is limited and starting to cause a growing level of unmet need. The children with disability and short breaks teams have worked hard to spot purchase residential short breaks and this has required significant travel for children and families and spot purchase nightly rates (including transport costs) that are high. Cheshire East Children's Commissioning have started to re-engage with Cheshire West and Chester (CWAC) in order to resume access to their in-house residential short break facility (Pine Wood) that is in a central position for Cheshire East and only a couple of miles over the boarder.

Achievements and plans

Achievements from 2018 - 2020:

- Mobilisation of four Children's Homes achieved
- Bespoke- SALT support secured
- Homes in the borough for 8 young people

Plans for 2021 - 2023:

- Utilise four new Children's Homes as platform to develop Bespoke vision and wrap around support i.e. Sensory OT
- Stepdown to fostering – scheme established and carers recruited (including salaried carers)
- Establish a formal contract with CWAC to gain access for Cheshire East families to Pine Wood

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16+ accommodation and care leavers

Standards of excellence: Children's Trust partners, including housing, work together to secure a range of provision to meet the needs of those who become looked after at the age of 16 and 17, and support the continuity of accommodation beyond the age of 18

Standards of excellence: Services are available in adequate quantity to respond to children and young people, including predicted demand for a range of needs, and emergencies

Standards of excellence: Services are situated across the local authority area to reflect geographical distribution of need

We are extremely proud of our offer for Care Leavers; by working with all partners we have choice for young people and a process that provides them with a voice and ownership of their accommodation and future plan. Young people are allocated a personal advisor at 16 and they are there to support care leavers until they reach 25. Our collective actions to continually improve the sufficiency of cared for children's accommodation and support is set out within this statement and our key actions are captured at the end. These actions will be closely monitored to ensure the sufficiency duty is met. Central to our approach is the wishes and views of our young people who have quite clearly told us that what is important is being consulted on where they live and having a choice where to live when leaving care. Our local offer for care leavers has been created with the help of a group of young people and can be viewed here: <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/care-and-support-for-children/services-from-childrens-social-care/local-offer-for-care-leavers.aspx>.

We have a strong offer for our care leavers including taster flats, supported independent living, supported lodgings with host families', dispersed properties with the offer of floating support and staying put arrangements. Working with external providers we have helped shape the offer within Cheshire East by developing partnerships and encouraging establishment and growth in the areas in which we need more. By developing our block contract arrangements, not only do these contracts provide young people with a greater choice it also provides excellent value for money and less reliance on the external market.

Complimenting all of this growth is access to the Leaving Care (SaLLs) framework through Placements North West. In line with the commissioning cycle these

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developments have all been designed following analysis of data, feedback and good practice i.e. the taster flats.

Cheshire East hold a monthly Ignition Panel which is for young people aged 15½ plus who are thinking about where and how they would like to live when they begin their transition to adulthood (we think the earlier we can plan the better the experience!) Ignition is made up of a range of partners; Housing, Social Landlords, YMCA, P3 and Forum Housing Supported Lodgings, Young people attend Ignition and describe their current situation and where they would like to be in the future, partners listen and then describe what they have to offer or what they could develop to meet need. Young people are able to visit different provisions, so they are able to make a more informed choice. The taster flat provided by YMCA allows young people to experience independent living for a 2 week period with floating support to assist with budgeting, household skills, food shopping, cleaning, cooking etc. and it allows young people return home with an idea of whether they are ready to live independently and support to work on areas for development.

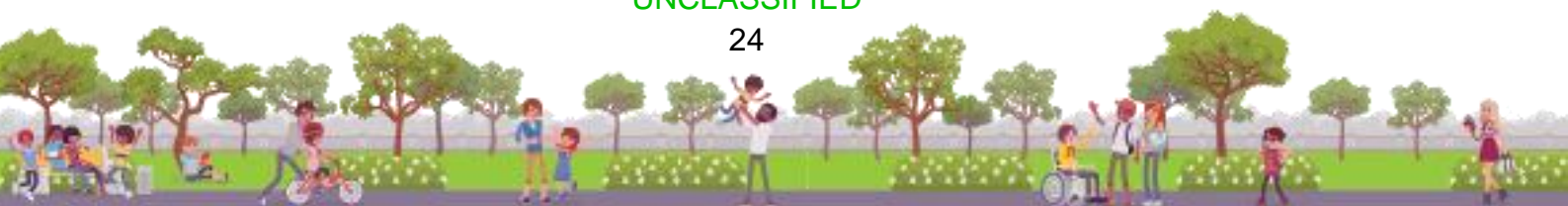
The panel also discuss young people who have been supported to move on; this helps ensure the home is still meeting their needs and also helps develop our learning and knowledge of available homes for children. This whole process is very important for commissioning as it helps identify any gaps to address and good practice that we can celebrate and build upon.

Ignition is evidence of our commitment to the approach of young people having a say about where they live, and it has seen greater stability for our young people. We have further developed our 16 + Ignition offer; and we have increased the number of taster properties to five in 2019 with two further dispersed properties in Crewe commissioned in 2020 in order to improve the accommodation offer and also provide some contingency arrangements during the pandemic. Our supported accommodation and independent living re-commission which starts January 2021 establishes dispersed properties in the Macclesfield area.

In March 2020 there were 33 cared for children living in semi-independent / supported living homes; which is 6% of the cared for population; these numbers have remained fairly consistent. We are witnessing more stability for children living in supported accommodation and independent living homes and more equipped and prepared young people who are ready to take their next independent steps.

In March 2019 Cheshire East supported 234 Care Leavers. In March 2020 we supported 269 young adults. This increase has come from more young people being

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accommodated and an increased number of Care Leavers returning for a service post 21yrs of age, under the new 21-25 duties from the Children & Social Work Act 2017. The service is agile and able to respond to the differing needs of this cohort.

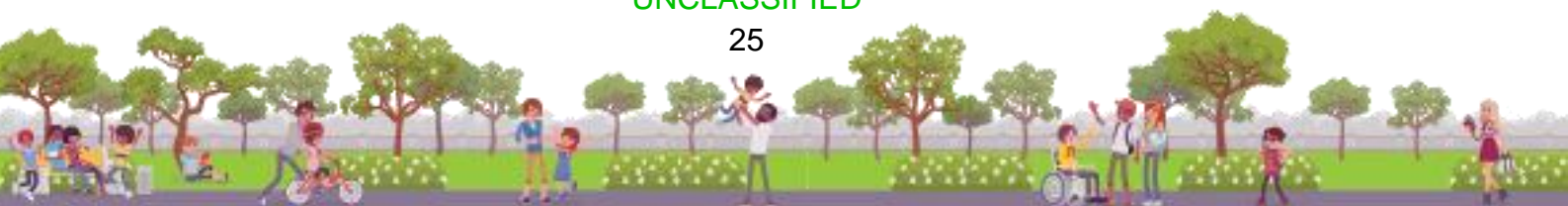
Support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people

In the past 12 months the number of current and former relevant asylum-seeking children (UASC) and young people has remained at a relatively consistent number. As of the 6th March 2019 we supported 39 young people seeking asylum and at the 6th of March 2020 we supported 40 young people. This stable year followed two years of increasing UASC's arriving spontaneously via the M6 and surrounding roads. The offer to these young people is the same as any other cared for young person or Care Leaver however planning can be more difficult as the support we offer can change depending on the outcome and timeliness of their asylum claim with the Home Office. Some young people are granted leave to remain very quickly whereas others wait for their decision after turning 18yrs and beyond. This means that they cannot work or settle like their peers. In 2020 during the period of Covid-19 we continued to support the spontaneous arrival or identification of young people needing asylum and a further two young people via the National Transfer Scheme.

We have an excellent accommodation offer for our young people seeking asylum within Cheshire East with emergency provisions available for the day they arrive and then more independent shared accommodation options available once assessments of their needs and abilities have been completed. In the past 12 months we have had 3 of our young people who now have successfully got their own tenancy via Cheshire Home Choice and are making roots, connections and friendships in Crewe. This has followed a path of supported accommodation, advice and assistance from their Personal Advisors to make sure that their outcomes can be achieved.

In Cheshire East we are constantly thinking of creative ways to best support our young people into adulthood, one of these is the creation of a UASC Care Leaver Ambassador who has experienced the Immigration system and the support from the Local Authority. The young man who has taken this volunteer role will meet newly arrived young people to reassure them and explain his own journey and experiences. Another way to help is that in partnership with the YMCA we also run a UASC Social Evening each fortnight and a fortnightly game of football. It is a place where our young people can have fun, socialise, meet new friends and gather advice from keyworkers.

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Those in the group who are settled, working and have their own homes have inspired the younger and newly arrived young people to have aspirations for the future.

Other accommodation at 18

Staying Put and Staying Close allow young people to have the option and support in place to stay close to their Foster Carers or Residential home when they leave, or to reside with the Foster Care family past their 18th birthday. As of 31st March 2020, we had a total of 20 young people in staying put foster families. Staying Put has started to develop within CE, which is extremely positive, but this has had an impact upon the number of foster carers available. In 2020 we will be working with our bespoke children's homes to develop Staying Close.

Achievements and plans

Achievements from 2018 - 2020:

- Growth in the number of Ignition taster flats (currently 5 with plans for more)
- Increase in our commissioned block contract offer
- Greater stability in homes for children and a planned transition

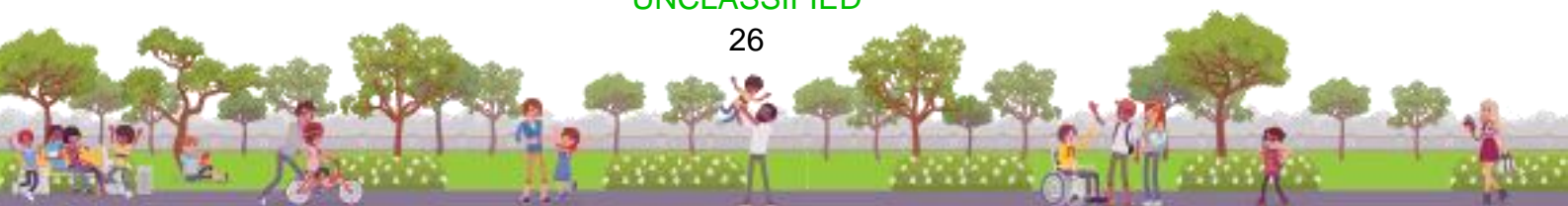
Plans for 2021 - 2023:

- Taster Flat Provision in Macclesfield
- CE Quality Assurance Visits to all 16+ provision
- Increase the number of individual tenancies
- Re-design and re-locate the emergency bed provision delivered by the new Crewe YMCA commission
- Develop a stock of homes for life for our care leavers through the new commission
- Create a dedicated UASC worker
- Establish contingency plans for 18+ accommodation
- Develop staying close with residential providers

Adoption

Standards of excellence: All children with adoption recommendations are placed with an adoptive family within 12 months of that recommendation

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Cheshire East is transitioning into permanent arrangements with our regional adoption agency Adoption Counts which provides adoption services to Cheshire East, Stockport, Trafford, Manchester and Salford.

The working relationship between the LA and the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) has been fundamental to the success so far of the partnership working and has been embedded at all levels. The Director of Children's Social Care sits as a member of the Adoption Counts Board. The Head of Service with a link to adoption is invited to attend the quarterly operations group meetings. These provide an important opportunity for operational issues to be raised and shared with equivalent managers from the other partner LAs and with the senior managers in the RAA. There is a shared ownership of the agenda and a range of issues are discussed with very positive communication and outcomes as a result. The group has identified the need for input from the RAA to ensure that staff in the LAs maintain their knowledge and benefit from updates to practice and research. For example:

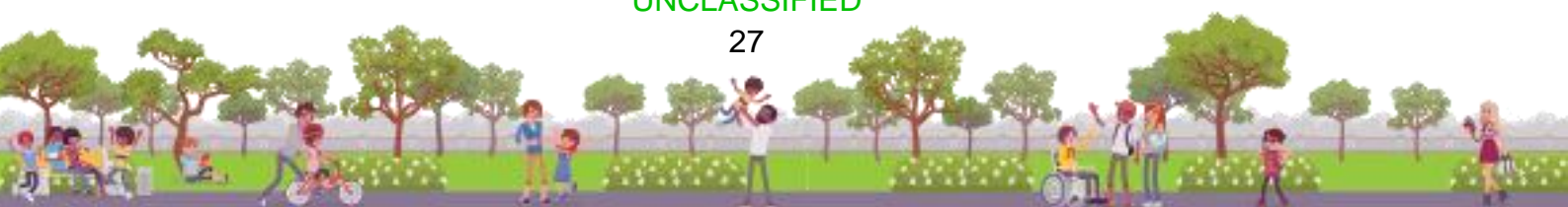
- The fostering team manager has been an active member of the moving to adoption transitions steering group. This is concentrating on standardising practice using recent research from the University of East Anglia about the transition from foster carers to an adoptive home.
- Colleagues from Cheshire East have attended a conference exploring practice developments adoption transitions.

The Operations Manager linked to Cheshire East is in regular contact with the Head of Service linked to adoption to discuss performance over the period and any issues or themes that may be arising. This is very much a two-way dialogue, with Cheshire East ensuring that the RAA is fulfilling its responsibilities as well as the RAA being able to offer feedback to the LA about any emerging themes or issues in care planning or working together.

The Head of Service for cared for children and care leavers and the Service Manager for cared for children and care leavers attend the monthly Adoption Counts tracking meetings and are active participants. The tracking meetings are an opportunity for scrutiny and performance management following the whole cohort of Cheshire East children where there is or may be a plan of adoption including:

- Children now adopted to ensure that life story books and later life letters are received

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- Children placed for adoption but not yet adopted to track the progress of placements and the timeliness of adoption order applications
- Children where a family has been identified to ensure that there is no avoidable delay in the shortlisting and matching process and throughout the planning of introductions and placement
- Children subject to a Placement Order where a family has not yet been identified. This cohort is rigorously discussed to ensure that the family finding strategy is being carried out effectively and is the forum for escalation of agreements regarding family finding within the RAA, other LAs or in the voluntary sector.
- Children in care proceedings where there may be a plan of adoption as their final care plan. These children are tracked closely both in the LA and the RAA to ensure that there is timely progression of the plan from Agency Decision that they Should Be Placed for Adoption, through profiling and the identification of a family.
- Children under the Public Law Outline where there may be a plan of adoption should care proceedings be initiated.
- Children requiring legal revocation of Placement Orders and “Should be placed for adoption” rescinds.

There is no doubt that the efficacy of these meetings is improved when care planning representatives from the local authority (LA) attends as this ensures a robust joint approach.

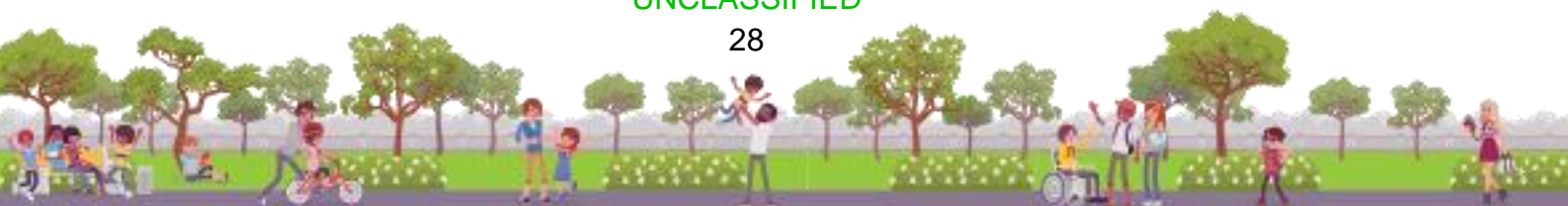
The team manager in the RAA linked to Cheshire East also attends the monthly tracking meetings and she, alongside the three dedicated Family Finders, regular work in Cheshire East office bases alongside the social work teams, attend legal gateway meetings and final care planning meetings to provide advice and a view where required. Links between Cheshire East and the RAA seem to be embedded well.

Performance

Children made Subject to Should be Placed for Adoption (SHOBPA) decisions

Number of children made subject to SHOBPA decisions per month 2019-20							
Cheshire East	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	
	1	1	1	5	1	3	
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
	2	3	0	1	2	3	23

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Children subject to Placement Orders

Number of children made subject to Placement Orders per month 2019-20							
Cheshire East	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	
	3	2	1	0	1	5	
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
	2	5	1	1	1	3	25

Out of the 25 Placement Orders granted within the period:

- Ten children have subsequently been placed for adoption with two of the children adopted by their foster carers.
- Six children have been linked with prospective adopters.
- There are nine children for whom a Placement Order has been granted within the last six months but are yet to be placed.

Number of Children Placed for Adoption during year

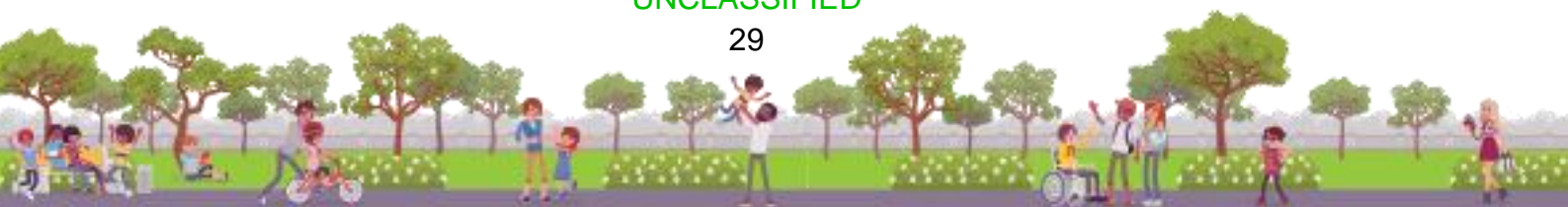
Number of children placed for adoption per month							
Cheshire East	April 2019	May 2019	June 2019	July 2019	August 2019	Sept 2019	
	1	1	2	1	2	1	
	Oct 2019	Nov 2019	Dec 2019	Jan 2020	Feb 2020	Mar 2020	Total
	2	2	3	1	2	1	19

74% of the children placed for adoption were placed with prospective adopters approved by Adoption counts.

For sixteen of the children placed for adoption during this period, it has taken longer than the A2** measure of 121 days to achieve permanence. Whilst it has taken longer to achieve permanence for the children identified above, it has been important to ensure families are identified who possess the right skill sets and experiences to meet the needs of the children. Adoption Counts and Cheshire East continue to work together from an early stage in care planning to ensure adoption plans for children who may wait longer i.e. sibling groups and older children, are achievable and the right plans for those individual children.

***A2. Average time (in days) between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family, for children who have been adopted*

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Number of children adopted

Number of children made subject to Adoption Orders per month							
Cheshire East	April 2019	May 2019	June 2019	July 2019	August 2019	Sept 2019	
	1	2	2	2	0	3	
	Oct 2019	Nov 2019	Dec 2019	Jan 2020	Feb 2020	Mar 2020	Total
	2	0	1	0	0	3	16

For this cohort, the average number of days for A1*** is 486 days, which is 60 days above the threshold of 426 days but within the overall average for England. From the 16 children adopted, 9 were within the A1 threshold. For the remaining 7 children outside of the threshold:

****A1. Average time (in days) between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted*

For A2, the average number of days for this cohort is 231 days which is 110 days over the threshold of 121 days. From the 16 children adopted, three were adopted within the A2 measure and a further five within 4 – 6 months. For the remaining 8 children it has taken over six months to find a permanent family. Whilst it has taken longer to place the majority of children with an adoption plan during this period, many of the children have had extremely complex health or developmental needs, are aged 4 years or over and / or part of a sibling group and therefore are children who are likely to wait longer in achieving permanence through adoption. It is a positive outcome for these children that whilst it has taken longer, permanence has been achieved within the right families.

Early Permanency

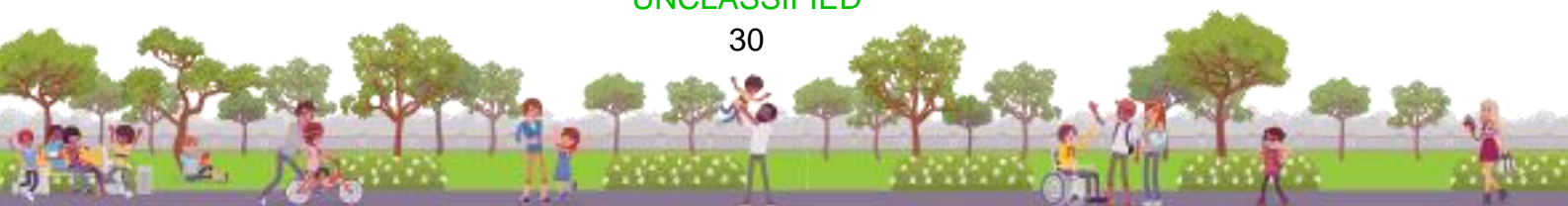
Two children were placed in early permanence placements during this period. The children were placed with carers temporarily approved by Cheshire East's Agency Decision Maker as foster carers under regulation 25A of the care planning regulations.

Achievements and plans

Achievements from 2018 - 2020:

- evidenced base decision to move into permanent arrangements within Adoption Count agreed 'in principal' by the Council in September 2020

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- Timeliness of adoption for children continues to outlie national average meaning children are achieving permanency in a timely way
- Children with complex needs being matched and adopted providing permanence and stability for their future
- DEF recognition for services to children in adoption
- Establishment of the Centre of Excellent for post adoption services to adopted children and their families

Plans for 2021 - 2023:

- Continue to recruit and approve sufficient adopters to be able to meet demand and also bespoke homes for children in line with specific needs
- Transition into permanent arrangements within Adoption Counts to offer the stability to the service and the children we support

Other services available to children and young people

Standards of Excellence - There is a diverse range of universal, targeted and specialist services working together to meet children's needs, including children and young people who are already looked after as well as those at risk of becoming looked after or in custody

Cheshire East has a wide-ranging offer that is designed around evidenced need. Due to the size of the authority there is a locality approach to service delivery. Cheshire East's Consultation Service (ChECS) provides a holistic approach to advice, support and referring to appropriate services across the continuum of need.

The organisational structure in Cheshire East supports a multi-disciplinary approach to working with vulnerable children, young people and families across the whole spectrum of need. Children's Social Care sits in the "People Directorate" alongside Adult Social Care, Public Health, Commissioning and Communities. Strong leadership ensures a joined up strategic approach, facilitating good operational working relationships. Shared boards and working groups provide a platform for all teams to develop plans that align to the corporate and directorate specific priorities. Through this way of working, Children's Social Care is high on the agenda in partnership groups such as All Age Mental Health Partnership, Early Intervention and Prevention Board, Health and

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Wellbeing Board, All Age Autism Pathway working group and Health Services (0-19+, Emotionally Healthy Children). The strong relationship with commissioning ensures that Children's Social Care is well represented in service specification, development and quality assurance.

Our Early Help offer is delivered internally and through commissioned services and provides support at the earliest opportunity to help stop issues from escalating. This support may come from universal services, for example our Youth Engagement Service, Family Support, Early Years, Schools or from a more targeted provision such as @ct, CAMHS, Children in Need or Virtual School or Youth Offending Service. Services work together to support children and families and, where appropriate, provide a step-down approach to Early Help Plan's. For the Children and Young People who become Cared For, Cheshire East have developed the Bespoke model which offers targeted, wrap around support to the Young Person. Additional resource has been commissioned to ensure the holistic needs of the Young Person are met in a timely manner and through the Bespoke model, children and young people can access Speech and Language therapy, mental health support via dedicated CAMHS workers and plans are in place to recruit a Sensory Occupational Therapist.

Cheshire East continue to hold a weekly Resource and Permanence Panel (RAPP) meetings. RAPP was established in 2017 to support colleagues with both ideas and challenge for all moving home requests; encouraging more innovative and creative thinking. The approach used is in line with Signs of Safety. RAPP encourages Social Workers to think differently but it also challenges services to think and deliver differently too. Since October 2020, RAPP has been refreshed to consider cohorts of children to promote early permanence planning alongside the allocation of resource. This approach will strengthen a whole Social Care approach to achieving the best homes for children in a timely manner.

The role of the Children's Commissioning team

Standards of Excellence - In addition to meeting relevant National Minimum Standards, services are of a quality to secure the specific outcomes identified in the care planning process for children and young people

Once a search for a new home is undertaken any offers that the Children's Commissioning team receive are forwarded to the young person's social worker and

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social worker's manager. Attached to the offer will be information containing the residential home's Statement of Purpose, latest OFSTED inspection, Reg 44 and Young Person's Handbook. The provider will also provide the names of any other Local Authority whose children may be placed in that provision so references can be sought, and any matching considerations further checked out.

Where possible the Commissioning Team and the Social Worker should visit any new homes together prior to the young person visiting. A lot of effort is put into establishing the quality of the provision, ensuring the staff and manager of the home have the right skills and approach and, most importantly, have a warm, kind and inviting home.

Young people, wherever possible, visit the home to see if it is somewhere they would like to live and can buy into. It is important for young people to feel in control of their future and feel they have a say in the plan.

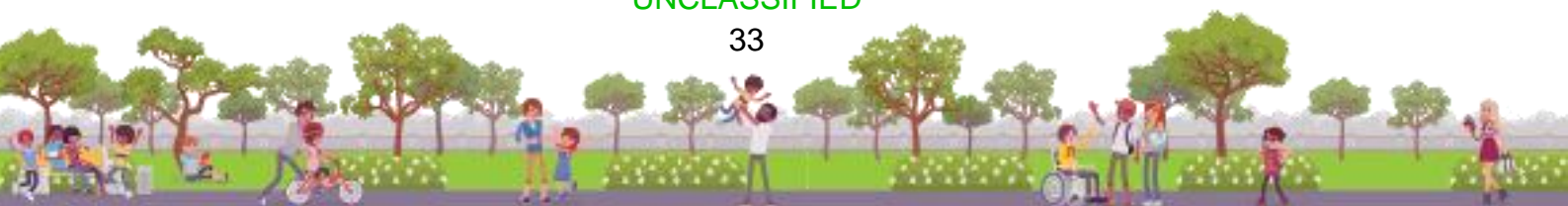
Residential settings and IFAs provide regular updates on how the home for the child is going. Residential homes also send their monthly Reg 44 reports. The greater the relationship is with providers the more we can support the home for the child by facilitating ongoing dialogue.

Quality Assurance visits take place across all residential and 16+ homes and certain Independent Fostering Agencies; this provides close scrutiny of the home for the child and the opportunity to develop relationships with our providers. Voice for Children (a Social Enterprise run by a Cheshire East care leaver utilising the lived experience of being in care) undertake the visits with us providing a genuine opportunity to capture the young person's views. The framework for quality assurance visits has been reviewed to ensure that its coverage is rigorous and joined up with the collaborative approach being led by Placements North West.

Prior to the QA visit information is collated from family, social workers, Independent Reviewing Officer, Virtual School and any other professionals who are linked to the young person to understand what is going well, concerns or any issues. This information is shared with the provider. Likewise, feedback is gathered from the provider and fed back to CE.

Information about Ofsted inspections is collated monthly and uploaded to Liquid Logic, any negative changes to ratings results in a visit to understand the reasons for the change and what plans are in place to address any issues raised.

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Independent Placement Agreements (IPA) are used for all external IFA, semi-independent and residential homes; they include details about agreed outcomes, review periods and costs. IPAs have been amended on Liquid Logic so that they are aligned with the outcomes detailed in the request for moving home form and are automated which ensures they reach the provider in a more timely manner; ensuring everyone is clear about the outcomes required, timescales and costs.

We have undertaken a review of the home and family finding process to look at ways in which we could improve our practice and processes. Following this a number of changes have been implemented which has provided a big impact. We now have a daily Huddle with commissioning, resources and fostering colleagues, this ensures clarity about home and family finding searches, that information and updates are shared on a daily basis and more teams are working together.

The review of home and family finding looked at the request for moving home form and working alongside Signs of Safety we were able to make this form more young person and strength focused. All of the work undertaken has resulted in more measured, clear and timely moving home requests which has helped with home and family finding searches and provided a choice.

Standards of Excellence - Universal services know when a child or young person is looked after and have good links with the range of targeted and specialist services which support them, including placement providers

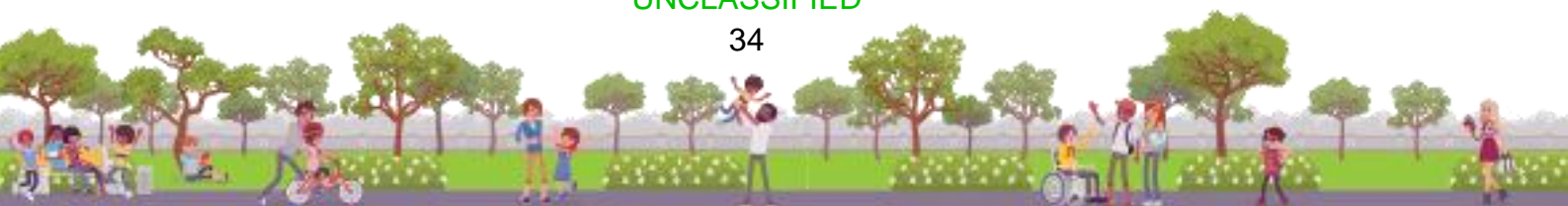
Standards of Excellence - Placement providers (including private, voluntary and public sector providers) are linked into the wider network of services and work with these services to offer appropriate support to deliver identified outcomes for looked after children

When a young person enters care the details of their new home are entered into Liquid Logic and an automated notification is sent to our colleagues in Safeguarding, Health and Virtual School. Case notes are continually updated so information sharing is in place; each team is responsible for sharing information with the relevant services as appropriate.

Our residential providers are proactive in linking with other services in their local area. This requirement is set out in the IPA and is checked as part of the QA visit.

Sometimes young people do not want people to know they are cared for and we must always be fully respectful of that whilst keeping them safe.

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Locally we hold Provider Forums for all homes for children providers and facilitate a varied agenda that provides a range of updates; we invite speakers, share good practice from across the region and try to link services up. We also hold multi-agency CHAPs meetings (including the Police) with Cheshire East based children's home providers to ensure effective intelligence and support requirements are shared and acted upon.

Linking everything together is Children's Commissioning. The Commissioning Team works across the whole of children's services and have excellent links covering Early Help, SEN, Young Carers, Social Care and Adults Services.

Standards of Excellence - There are mechanisms in place to ensure that professionals involved in placement decisions have sufficient knowledge and information about the supply and quality of placements and availability of all specialist, targeted and universal support services within the local authority area

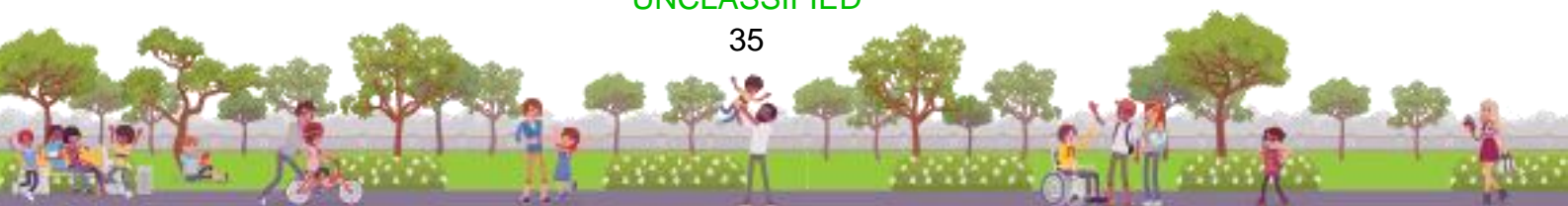
The Commissioning team is co-located with frontline social work teams which ensures strong knowledge re supply of homes for children (via internal provision, commissioned services, 4 frameworks, off contract providers, market shaping etc.) and strong evidence of quality prior to commencement and QA pre and post moving is shared effectively.

At 10am every morning the Commissioning team, Fostering Team and service managers gather round the white board to discuss home and family finding searches, where they are up to, any blockages, ideas or solutions; this practice has improved partnership working, has speeded up finding homes for children and has helped future planning as we have a board that also records internal foster care provision and respite requests. Social Workers can call in and contribute ideas and keep up to date with where the search is up to. Commissioning are able to share intelligence about specific homes and areas and there is a wealth of knowledge about IFA carers alongside our internal FC.

RAPP, Ignition and NEET Panel all provide young people and colleagues with knowledge about the local offer and support available. Ensuring homes for children are reviewed in a timely manner enables knowledge sharing about what is available in Cheshire East and the benefits of working more closely with local support.

Links with North West Commissioners enable good practice to be shared as we continually strive to do and be better.

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Standards of Excellence - The local authority and the Children's Partnership collaborate with neighboring Children's Trusts to plan the market for children in care and commission in regional or sub-regional arrangements

Cheshire East has strong partnerships in place with all neighboring authorities.

Adoption Counts is a new, collaborative adoption agency, bringing the professional expertise and specialist skills of five local authorities from across Greater Manchester and Cheshire together to deliver adoption services of the highest quality

We hold joint Provider Forums with Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington which has proved extremely valuable and promoted more joint working and problem solving. The ability to discuss issues on a footprint that aligns to that of Cheshire Police also brings its benefits.

Alongside other NW local authorities we fund a small but highly effective Placements North West team. We benefit from the co-ordination of a range of framework contracts, sharing good practice from others; IFA Quality Assurance pilots, training and procurement. Placements NW also produce regular scorecard information and an annual census across the range of homes for children activity which provides valuable intelligence and benchmarking.

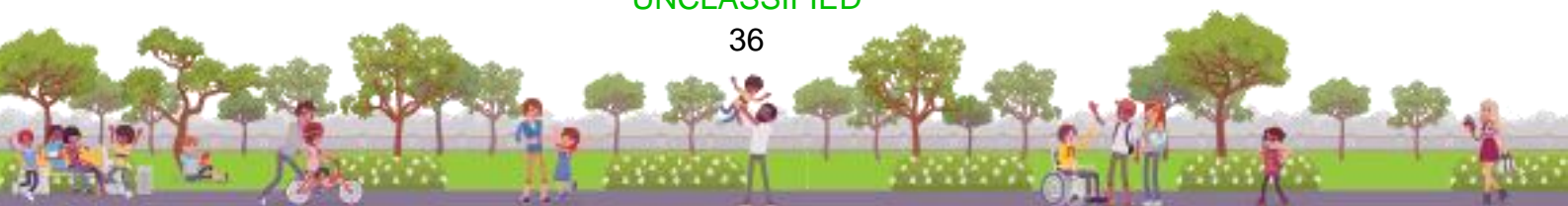
Achievements and plans:

Having a good offer of local SEN school places is a key ingredient of being able to place cared for children locally. Cheshire East Council is leading the establishment of a new regional SEND Flexible Purchasing System that will go live early 2021.

Contingency Planning

This Sufficiency Statement has been written as we enter the eighth month of a Covid-19 pandemic. The Council and its partners have strengthened and adapted their support in response to COVID-19 which has supported sufficiency for our cared for children and care leavers in a rounded way. The following provides a summary of some of the actions taken that we will build on and take lessons learned into the coming years to manage to the end of this pandemic and any future crisis changes as a result of national restrictions.

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Fostering:

Under the strategic direction of the fostering development board Cheshire East are seeing positive results of a new brand and marketing and recruitment campaign. The additional capacity will ensure that we will be able to bridge the gap that exists between independent and internal homes for children. In order to be cited on sufficiency in times of uncertainty, the fostering service send out each week a list of all carers who are on standby for a potential new child to be placed with them.

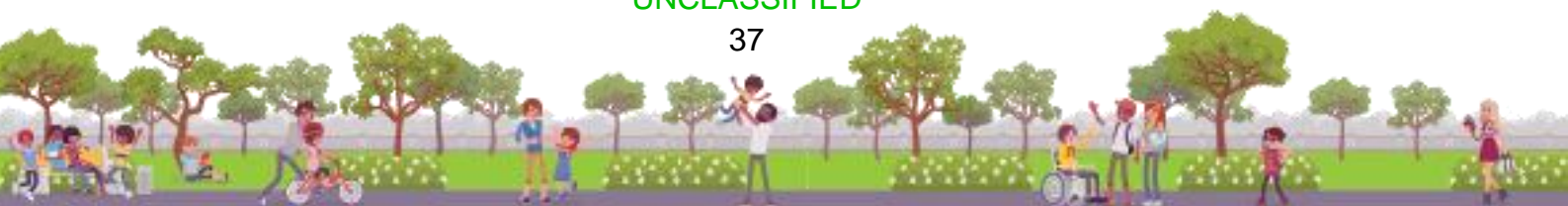
Residential:

Our four commissioned Children's Homes became operational between February and July 2020 i.e. during the onset of the pandemic. This commissioned capacity provides good flexibility in order to respond to unexpected sufficiency requirements during the pandemic. We have been able to use the resource creatively during the pandemic when staffing within the homes has been a challenge and created an opportunity for an alternative way of working.

Supported Accommodation and Independent Living:

- The contract for the commission of Supported Accommodation and Independent Living was varied in July 2020 in order to add five additional units of accommodation in order to contingency plan for the pandemic.
- The Council currently commissions Pure Insights to deliver mentoring support to our care leavers. Pure Insights have been able to bring added value to this commission through establishing a Psychological Wellbeing Service and a trauma counsellor. This has provided excellent support to a vulnerable group of care leavers during the pandemic.
- A former Children's Home (Claremont – owned by Cheshire East Council) was not utilised in the recent re-commission and is being held in order to create a Mum & Baby home. The timing of the new home has been consciously delayed in order that Claremont can be used in emergency circumstances during the pandemic.
- At times during the pandemic when the council have been required to take on other responsibilities, weekly strategic meetings have taken place to ensure that the

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needs of the community are met and that cared for children and care leavers have been prioritized.

Placements North West co-ordination role:

Placements North West have played an integral part of coordinating the impact on cared for children accommodation (staff and young people) of Covid and summarizing the availability of placements across the region. They continue to support the region is sharing good practice and offer a quality assurance function over a broader footprint.

Stability of existing placements:

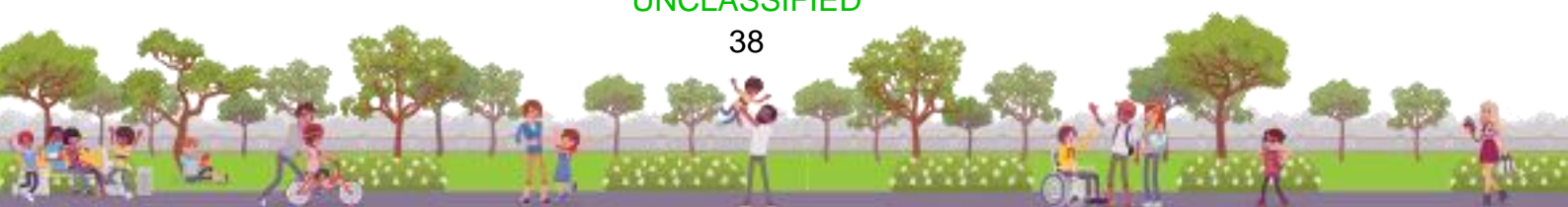
We recognized that the stability of our cared for children and care leavers could improve and so invested in a social work secondment of a placement stability lead who is an experience social worker. The role encompasses the values and principals of Cheshire East Vision for Children, young people and their families and early impact reports evidence that whilst we must continue to work on early intervention, the targeted support is enabling unplanned transitions to be smoother for children and young people where they understand what is happening far more than previously reported.

Under the revised SOP for the Children and Family Support Team we have also been able to strengthen our offer to foster carers, ensuring that they have access to a team of therapeutic social workers who can enhance the care experience of children and young people and support carers through some of the challenges that are faced.

Edge of care and Early Help

Cheshire East have a strong relationship and way of managing step up and step down to ensure that the right children are receiving the right support at the right time. When the needs within a family escalate the integrated front door are able to establish how best to meet the needs of the family. Later in children's journeys we have an experienced and passionate edge of care team who achieve real success in distracting behavior and preventing escalation to child protection and the need for care and support as a safeguarding measure.

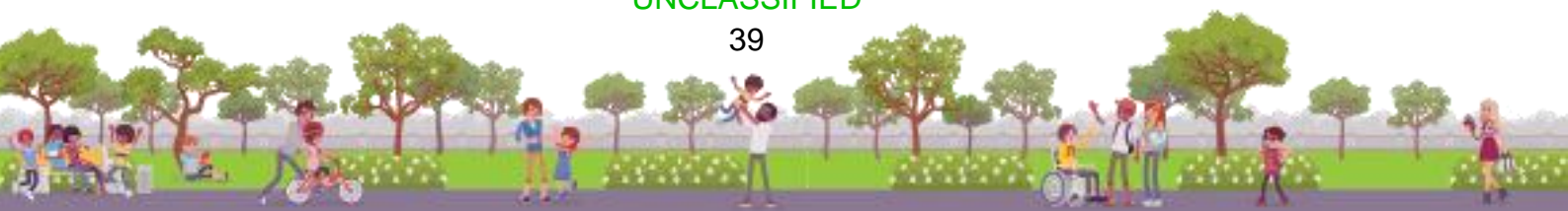
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Mental health and emotional well being

- Main providers of mental health support to children and young people have adapted their ways of working in order to maintain effective support.
- A 24/7 All Age Crisis line has been in place since 3 April 2020.
- Emotionally Healthy Child Programme and complimentary CCG early help mental health services (including online support and counselling) have been enhanced during the pandemic. Our cared for children and care leavers are a priority group for access to this emotional and mental health support.
- Cheshire East Council prepared well in advance of children returning to school in September 2020 in order to promote a safe, healthy and effective transition back to school. A partnership approach (Back to School TOGETHER) was taken, which included Cheshire East Council Education leads, Commissioners, Cheshire CCG, CWP, voluntary sector, and input from the CE Parent Carer Forum. In September we recruited a coordinator who will directly support and guide schools to recognise and respond to children's emotional wellbeing and mental health in regard to Covid. Officers have also created a comprehensive children's mental health service directory covering all partners. This directory is a working document that will be updated regularly to ensure it is relevant, it gives an oversight of the provision and referral pathway for each listed organization.
- During the early part of the pandemic Cheshire East Council's Live Well site was refreshed and resources added in support of children's mental health.
- A short programme of targeted Summer Activities were delivered through the Early Prevention and Intervention teams in July and August 2020 in order to support our most vulnerable families with their emotional and mental health.
- The Youth Support Service has been undertaking detached sessions in various hot spot areas where young people have been gathering during the pandemic. One of the aims of the detached youth work is to information and advice to support young people's mental health.
- Teams across Children's Services and our Schools are all focused and vigilant on children's emotional and mental health as they undertake their day to day work.

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- Our Children with Disabilities Short breaks commissioned services have been adapting their resources to support the emotional wellbeing of our families with children with a disability whilst the usual face to face groups / activities were unable to be delivered.
- Our 0 – 19+ service has been enhanced to put in place mental health specialist health visitors and school nurses. This change in service delivery is expected to be implemented before Christmas.
- Other grant opportunities
- The Council's Covid-19 Community Response & Recovery Fund has ensured that a wide range of partners and in particular organisations from the voluntary and community sector have received small amounts of financial support to help children and families manage the strains on emotional and mental health. Appendix 1 attached provides a summary of the projects that have been funded to date during the pandemic.
- RAGE Fitness an emotional well-being service targeted at care leavers was implemented around fitness and well-being

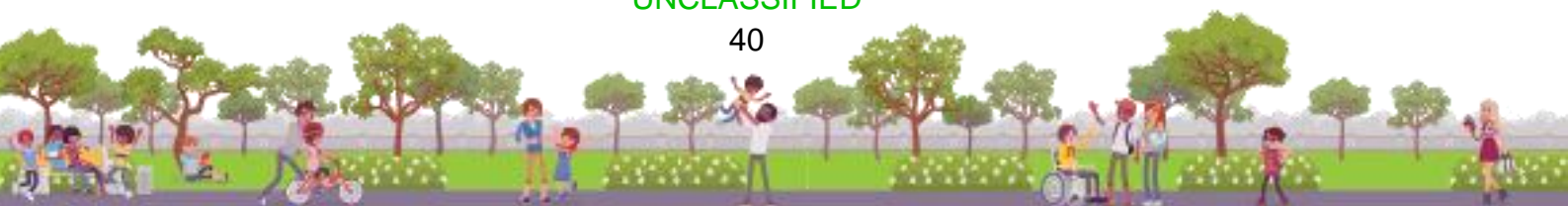
The Council and its partners will continue to be agile in support of children's emotional and mental health as the course of the pandemic continues to unfold.

In Conclusion

In many respects, the sufficiency duty is being met and considerable improvements have been made over the last 12 months to the whole system that works to deliver excellent outcomes for our children in care through good quality / value for money homes for children that are close to home, however, as detailed plans are in place to further improve the position and increase the range of provision within Cheshire East.

It is important that the actions identified in this Sufficiency Statement are monitored on a quarterly basis to ensure the improvement journey continues and the changes to the number / profile of children in care and the internal / external accommodation market provide appropriate influence on future actions. This sufficiency statement is used dynamically, and the actions are monitored by leaders to ensure that they are implemented. Cheshire East CSC team recognize the value that the Sufficiency Statement brings to ongoing service developments and as such key performance

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indicators are agreed by senior managers and accountability is sought through CPOG and internal reviews.

The key to performance in this area is ensuring the levels and quality of accommodation for children in care across the market is maximised. The right home at the start and the stability for children is the key to performance against the sufficiency duty. All our actions should focus on high quality outcomes for our cared for children, their voice should be loud and influence the way we work towards good quality, stable homes for children that are value for money.

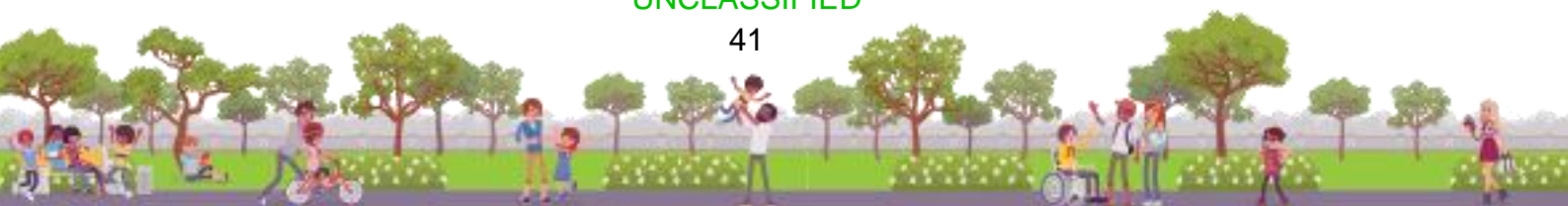
Decision making should reflect the importance of effective early help for children and families and this continuing across the whole life course. Continuous reflection and effective decision making that is sustainable across the lifetime will provide excellent outcomes for our children in care.

Proposed Actions

This action plan will be updated / added to on a quarterly basis and monitored at the Corporate Parenting Operational Group – workstream 3.

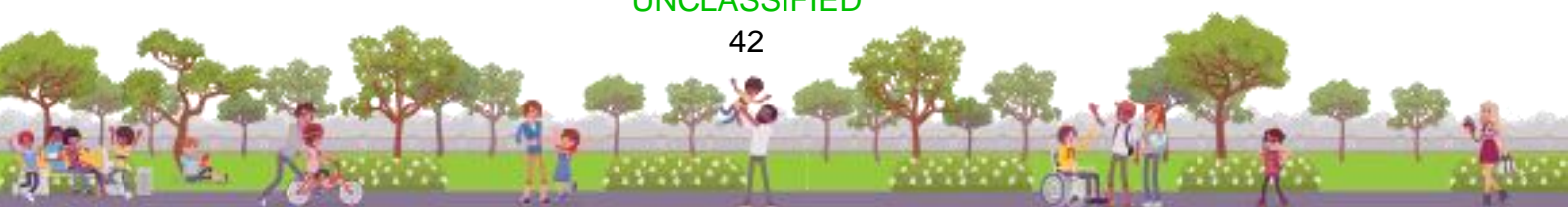
Standard of Excellence: All children are placed in the local authority area, except where this is not consistent with their needs and welfare.		
Action	Timeframe	Update
Review Resource Allocation Panel (RAP) and associated meetings	April 2021	
Further build our edge of care support structures / resources	Ongoing	
Continue to market shape and undertake activity to further develop local provision through work with external agency providers, other local authorities, Placements North West etc	Ongoing	
Re-commission the Children's Care at Home Framework for children with	October 2021	

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a disability and edge of care, in order to strengthen the support at home rather than needs escalating and requiring more specialist services		
Significantly improve the recruitment and retention of internal foster carers (see strategy and action plan)	Ongoing	
Mobilise the re-commission of the Supported Accommodation and Independent Living commission.	Jan / Feb 2021	
Standard of Excellence: All children with a plan of adoption are placed with an adoptive family within 12 months of that plan being approved.		
Action	Timeframe	Update
To increase the number of adopters for the children coming through the care planning process in each LA.	Ongoing	
To deliver a marketing campaign that will reach more adopters for BME children and sibling groups.	Ongoing	
Develop a tracking system that will ensure all children who potentially may be adopted are tracked through the process avoiding delays	Ongoing	
Adoption Counts puts in place approvals to sustain the adoption support Centre of Excellence, offering an improved support offer across the region to all adopters in need of professional advice/input	March 2021	

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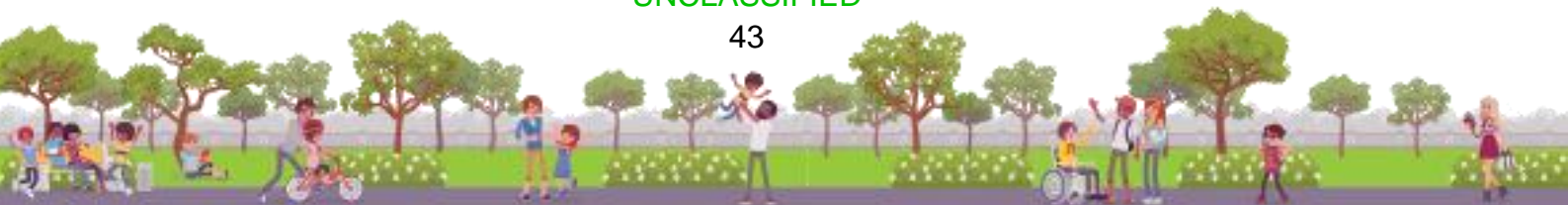
Standard of Excellence: There is a diverse range of universal, targeted and specialist services working together to meet children's needs, including children and young people who are already looked after as well as those at risk of becoming looked after or in custody.

Action	Timeframe	Update
Implement the priority actions from the Children's Joint Commissioning Strategy	Jan 2021 – Dec 2022	
CYPP vision and priorities	Ongoing	
To strengthen and target @CT resource to support families on the edge of care or custody	Ongoing	
To deliver and strengthen the Bespoke model of delivery	Ongoing	

Standard of Excellence: Our Children's Trust (including housing) work together to secure a range of provision to meet the needs of those who become looked after at the age of 16 and 17, and to support the continuity of education or accommodation beyond the age of 18.

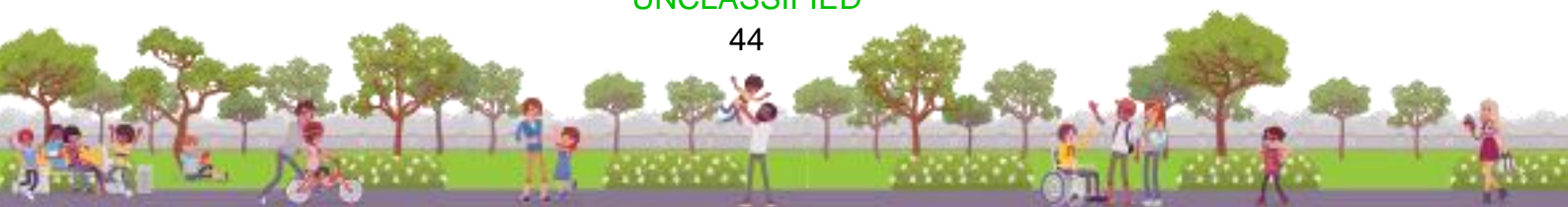
Action	Timeframe	Update
Mobilise the re-commission of 16+ Supported Accommodation and Independent Living, including: Increased units of accommodation New dispersed properties in the North Re-configured and re-located emergency accommodation in the South Formal offer of work placements and apprenticeships for our care leavers Develop a small stock of homes for life for care leavers	February 2021 and throughout contract term	
Develop a robust contingency plan for emergency housing for 18+	January 2021	

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Develop our Supported Lodgings offer further to offer support to young people with more complex needs. Support and influence the establishment of a new supported lodgings Lot within the NW SaLS	April 2021	
Complete priority actions from the NEET Summit in order to improve access to EET for our vulnerable groups	Ongoing	
Mobilise ESF Journey First in order to support care leavers into routes to employment	October 2020 – February 2021	
Voice for Children / Care Leavers team – Dragons Den to support care leavers with their business / employment ideas	January 2021	
CE Quality Assurance Visits to all 16+ provision	Ongoing	
Independent living skills – targeted work with 15 & 16 year olds in residential and foster care	Ongoing	
Standard of Excellence: Services are available in adequate quantity to respond to children and young people including predicted demand for a range of needs, and emergencies. Standard of Excellence: Services are situated across the local authority area to reflect geographical distribution of need		
Action	Timeframe	Update
Implement the recruitment and retention strategy action plan to: Increase the net availability of internal foster carers by 30 foster carers year on year (with a specific	Ongoing	

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<p>focus on parent and child carers, teenagers, siblings and children with a disability)</p> <p>Increase the number of Foster Carers who can provide short break provision for children with disabilities by over 6.</p> <p>Develop a specialist foster care program (including salaried carers) directly linked to 'Bespoke' to facilitate stepping out of residential provision</p> <p>Increase the emergency provision offer</p> <p>Develop remand foster care provision</p> <p>Launch second Mockingbird constellation and continue to build further constellations across the authority</p> <p>Reduce the number of children coming in to care by reviewing the Care at Home offer.</p>		
<p>Develop the wrap around support offer in order to deliver our Bespoke vision.</p>	2021	
<p>Establish a formal contractual arrangement with CWAC in order to access Pine Wood (residential short break facility)</p>	March 2021	
<p>Establish a Mum and Baby home out of Claremont in Crewe</p>	September 2021	

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Standard of Excellence: In addition to meeting relevant National Minimum Standards, services are of a quality to secure the specific outcomes identified in the care planning process for children and young people.

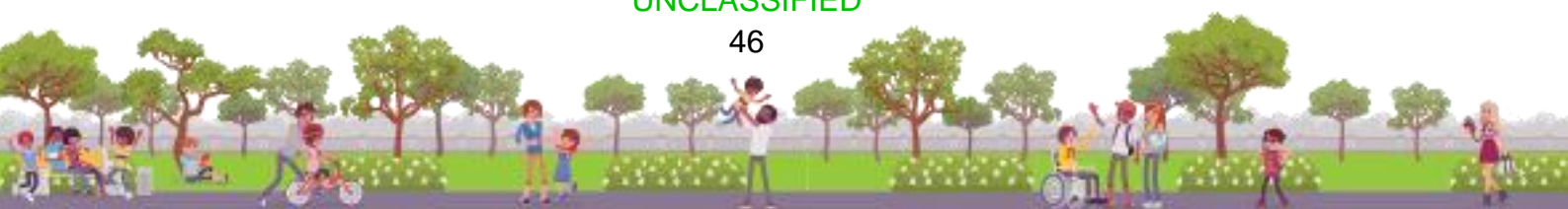
Action	Timeframe	Update
Increase the number of pre moving home visits	Ongoing	
Review and refresh the Quality Assurance visit framework and timetable, giving thought to a virtual approach given business continuity impacts. Drop-in and un-announced visits being a feature of our approach.	Ongoing	
Report Quality Assurance themes to Social Care Leadership Team.	Quarterly	

Standard of Excellence: Universal services know when a child or young person is looked after and have good links with the range of targeted and specialist services which support them, including placement providers.

Standard of Excellence: Placement providers (including private, voluntary and public sector providers) are linked into the wider network of services and work with these services to offer appropriate support to deliver identified outcomes for looked after children.

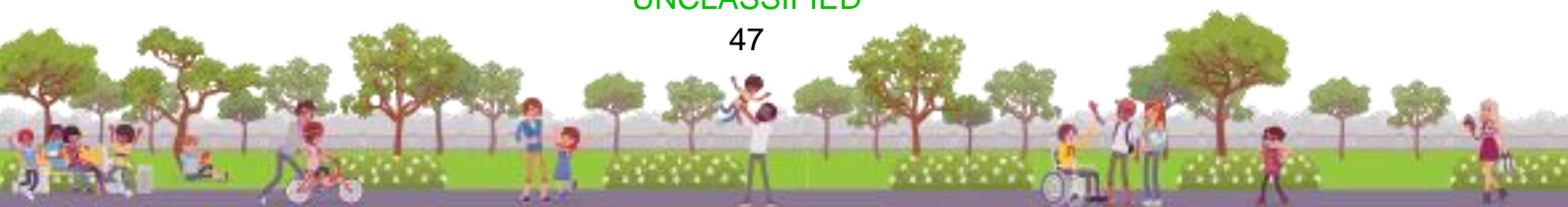
Action	Timeframe	Update
To further develop the Provider Forums with Partners and promote and re-affirm the wider offer for children and young people.	Ongoing	
To review the membership of RAP on a regular basis and ensure scope and communication is effective.	Ongoing	
Review format and attendance at CHAPs	March 2021	

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To ensure that all providers of accommodation and support are aware of the wide range of support captured on Live Well and that this is promoted at the range of partnership forums.	April 2021	
Standard of Excellence: There are mechanisms in place to ensure that professionals involved in placement decisions have sufficient knowledge and information about the supply and quality of placements and availability of all specialist, targeted and universal support services within the local authority area.		
Action	Timeframe	Update
Increase in the number of joint visits with Commissioning and Social Workers to homes for children prior to moving	Ongoing	
Develop greater links between Early Help and Providers within Cheshire East	Ongoing	
Develop partnerships and links with local providers through Provider Forums and extension of our Ignition approach.	Ongoing	
Standard of Excellence: The local authority and the Children's Partnership collaborate with neighbouring Children's Trusts to plan the market for children in care and commission in regional or sub-regional arrangements.		
Action	Timeframe	Update
To explore further opportunities to collaborate with neighbouring authorities in order to manage the market for independent fostering, residential care and Leaving Care more effectively	Ongoing	

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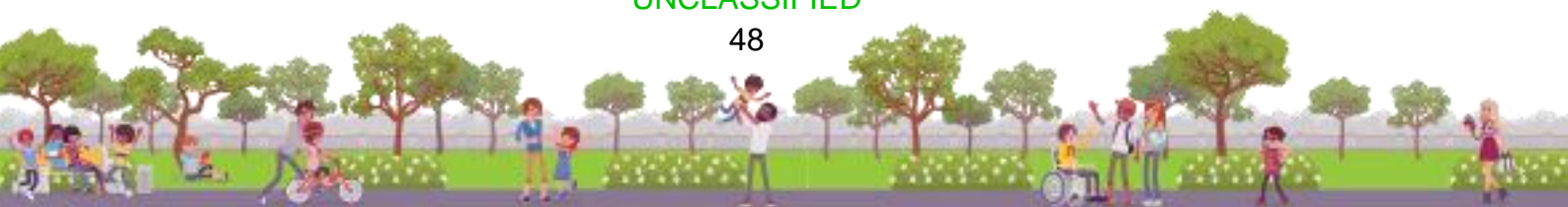


Performance Management Scorecard for Cared for Children's Accommodation

Key performance measures to supplement those included in service scorecards:

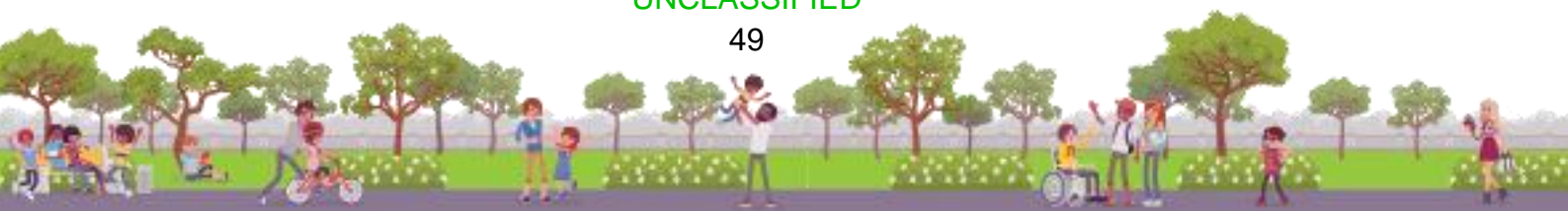
		2020-2021				Target	Comment
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
1	Actions in published sufficiency statement reviewed					Qtly review	
2	% of cared for children accommodated beyond 20 miles					20%	
3	% of cared for children in external agency homes that are rated good or outstanding					100%	
4	Number of cared for children in external agency homes rated inadequate					0	
5	Average weekly cost of external agency homes: Residential IFA					£3700 £800	
7	% occupancy level for commissioned residential					95%	
8	Contracts in place for external agency homes					100%	
9	Individual Placement Agreements for external agency homes for children which provide bespoke outcomes for cared for children					100%	
10	At least one compliance visit undertaken pa for each cared					100%	

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	for child in an external agency home						
11	Recruit and establish a team of 6 specialist salaried foster carers to care for our most complex children and young people.					6	
12	Increase the number of in-house mainstream Foster Carers by 30 over each of the coming 3 years, resulting in a net gain of 90.					90	
13	Increase the number of Specialist Mainstream Short Break Carers by 6 over three years. 1 in year 1, 2 in year 2 and 3 in year 3.					6	

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Working for a brighter future together

Key Decision N

Date First
Published: N/A

DECISION REPORT

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 30 March 2021

Report Title: Proposal on changes to the frequency of the Committee

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

Senior Officer: Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report proposes that from the new financial year at the beginning of April 2021, the Corporate Parenting Committee is held on a quarterly basis.
- 1.2. Currently the Committee is held bi-monthly. It is proposed that a quarterly Committee could retain the same amount of business, therefore this would be a more efficient use of resources. Holding the Committee quarterly would allow the Committee to be aligned to quarterly performance reporting therefore every Committee could be informed by the latest performance information.

2. Recommendation/s

- 2.1. Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to:
 - Note the contents of the report and consider the proposal.
 - Endorse the decision to hold the Committee on a quarterly basis within office hours from the new financial year in April 2021.
 - Review and endorse the changes to the terms of reference.

3. Reasons for Recommendation/s

3.1. It is proposed that a quarterly Committee has two benefits:

- The Committee could retain the same amount of business as it currently carries out on a bi-monthly basis, therefore this would be a more efficient use of resources.
- Holding the Committee quarterly would allow the Committee to be aligned to quarterly performance reporting therefore every Committee could be informed by the latest performance information.

4. Other Options Considered

4.1. The Corporate Parenting Committee could remain bi-monthly for 2021-22. This arrangement is currently effective but does not offer the two additional benefits outlined above. Recently, meetings have not needed the full two hours to cover the items on the agenda which suggests we could reduce the frequency of meetings without impacting on the business of the Committee.

5. Background

- 5.1. The Corporate Parenting Committee is currently an advisory group to the Cabinet.
- 5.2. On 19 November 2020, Cheshire East Council decided to adopt a committee system of governance. The committee system will commence from the Council's Annual General Meeting on the 12 May 2021. Under the new system, the Corporate Parenting Committee will be a sub committee of the Children and Families Committee.
- 5.3. The move to these new arrangements prompted a review of the Corporate Parenting Committee terms of reference and frequency.

6. Proposal to move to quarterly meetings

- 6.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is responsible for ensuring 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. It holds services and partners to account for the discharge of their responsibilities.
- 6.2 A proposed forward plan for quarterly meetings is included in the Appendix. This covers all the areas and reports currently received by the Committee,

therefore under quarterly meetings the Committee would still carry out the same amount of business.

- 6.3 Committee meetings are currently held between 4.00-6.00pm. The timing was originally agreed to allow children and young people to attend the meeting outside of school/ college hours. Young people have since chosen to inform the Committee through meeting as a Shadow Committee, so going forwards meetings can be held within usual office hours in line with other committees.
- 6.4 If Committee meetings were moved to being held quarterly for three hours, this would provide the same amount of time per year as holding bi-monthly meetings for two hours. When meetings return to being held face to face, this will support more effective use of resources as it will reduce travel. Reducing the number of meetings also reduces the amount of administration time outside of the meetings which is needed to support them to run effectively.
- 6.5 Recently, meetings have not taken the full two hours assigned to cover all the areas on the agenda, so it is anticipated that the proposed work plan could be comfortably delivered within quarterly meetings which are planned for three hours.
- 6.6 Holding the Committee quarterly would allow the Committee to be aligned to quarterly performance reporting, therefore every Committee could be informed by the latest performance information. Bi-monthly meetings cannot be aligned in the same way so currently some meetings are unable to be informed by performance information and sometimes performance information can be outdated when it is received by the Committee due when meetings fall.

7. Implications of the Recommendations

7.1. Policy Implications

- 7.1.1. Through aligning meetings with performance information, this proposal aims to effectively support the Corporate Parenting Committee to carry out its responsibilities and to put cared for children, young people and care leavers at the centre of Council policy and decision making.

7.2. Legal Implications

- 7.2.1. The Corporate Parenting Committee, within the Council's new committee system of governance, will be a sub committee of the Children and Families Committee.

7.2.2. The proposals adhere to relevant legislative requirements including that, as required by Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the proposed committee will appoint members on a politically proportionate basis.

7.2.3. There are no other specific legal implications.

7.3. Financial Implications

7.3.1. The proposal to move to quarterly meetings should allow us to use resources more effectively by streamlining administration outside of the meeting and reducing travel.

7.4. Equality Implications

7.4.1. There are no equality implications.

7.5. Human Resources Implications

7.5.1. The proposal to move to quarterly meetings should allow us to use resources more effectively by streamlining administration outside of the meeting and reducing travel.

7.6. Risk Management Implications

7.6.1. As with other Committees, additional meetings would be able to be scheduled if needed so there are no significant risks to consider as a result of this proposal.

7.7. Rural Communities Implications

7.7.1. There are no direct rural communities' implications of this report.

7.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1. The Committee would remain focused on outcomes for cared for and care experienced children and young people. This focus would be supported by receiving performance information at each meeting.

7.9. Public Health Implications

7.9.1. There are no public health implications.

7.10. Climate Change Implications

7.10.1. When meetings return to being held face to face, a reduction in the number of meetings will reduce the amount of travel required which will contribute to reducing the Council's impact on climate change.

8. Ward Members Affected

8.1. Applicable to all wards.

9. Consultation & Engagement

9.1. My Voice, our cared for children council, continue to meet virtually and will continue to inform the Committee through their Shadow Committee.

10. Access to Information

10.1. None.

11. Contact Information

11.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

Name: Kerry Birtles
Job Title: Director of Children's Social Care
Email: Kerry.Birtles@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Corporate Parenting Committee – Proposed Forward Plan for Quarterly Meetings

June 2021

Item	Lead Officer
Standing items	
Update from the Shadow Committee	HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers and Chair of the Committee
Update from members on engagement activity	All members who have carried out engagement activity in the quarter
Update report on progress against all areas – to include the results from the cared for children survey and foster carer fortnight	HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Corporate parenting scorecard Q4	HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Specific items	
Corporate parenting annual report (and review of terms of reference where relevant)	HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers and Chair of the Committee
Refresh of the Corporate Parenting Strategy	HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Review of the Local Offer	Service Manager and Team Manager for Care Leavers
Care Leavers Update – including the Care Leavers Annual Report and Care Leavers Survey	Service Manager and Team Manager for Care Leavers

September 2021

Item	Lead Officer
Standing items	
Update from the Shadow Committee	HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers and Chair of the Committee
Update from members on engagement activity	All members who have carried out engagement activity in the quarter
Update report on progress against all areas	HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Corporate parenting scorecard Q1	HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Specific items	
IRO Annual Report	Service Manager Cared for IROs
Children's Rights Annual Report (Advocacy and Independent Visitors)	Manager Children's Society
Adoption Annual Report	Service Manager Adoption
Adoption Panel Report	Service Manager Adoption

December 2021

Item	Lead Officer
Standing items	
Update from the Shadow Committee	HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers and Chair of the Committee
Update from members on engagement activity	All members who have carried out engagement activity in the quarter
Update report on progress against all areas	HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Corporate parenting scorecard Q2	HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Specific items	
Virtual School Headteachers Annual Report	HoS SEND and Virtual School Headteacher
Health of cared for children annual report 2020-21 and mid year report	Designated Nurse Cared for Children
Fostering service annual report	HoS Children with Disabilities and Fostering
Fostering Panel Report	HoS Children with Disabilities and Fostering

March 2022

Item	Lead Officer
Standing items	
Update from the Shadow Committee	HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers and Chair of the Committee
Update from members on engagement activity	All members who have carried out engagement activity in the quarter
Update report on progress against all areas	HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Corporate parenting scorecard Q3	HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Specific items	
Cared for survey results	HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Cared for Sufficiency Update	HoS Children's Commissioning and HoS Cared for Children and Care Leavers
Fostering recruitment update and plans for Foster Carer Fortnight	HoS Children with Disabilities and Fostering
Adoption 6 monthly report	Service Manager Adoption

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TERMS OF REFERENCE

Cheshire East Corporate Parenting Committee

Functions

This is a cross party advisory committee appointed by the Cabinet.Children and Families Committee.

It has 12 Members who are appointed on a politically proportionate basis and nominated by the political groups.

The Committee is informed by representative young people from the Children in Care Council to advise the Committee.

The Chair is the Portfolio Holder for Children and Families.

Purpose

The purpose of the Corporate Parenting Committee in its role as an advisory committee to ~~the Cabinet~~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.

Terms of Reference

1. Act as advocates 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.
2. Ensure key strategic plans ~~and reports~~ relating to children in care and care leavers are in place and are delivered including the Corporate Parenting Strategy, Sufficiency Statement and Children and Young People's Plan.
3. Oversee the implementation of Cheshire East's Corporate Parenting Strategy and action plan and monitor the quality and effectiveness of services to ensure they fulfil the council's responsibilities.
4. Monitor the quality of care delivered by Cheshire East's residential children's homes via the provision of reports including summary reports of Ofsted inspections.
5. Review the performance of the Council in relation to outcomes for children and young people in care via the scrutiny of both quarterly performance reports and annual reports, including the Health of Cared for Children and Care Leavers, the Virtual School, Fostering and the Independent Reviewing Service.

6. Establish an environment whereby Elected Members and young people work together to address the needs and aspirations of Cheshire East's children and young people in care and empower children and young people to participate in decision making with adults.
7. Oversee, with the Children and Families ~~Overview and Scrutiny~~ Committee, the implementation of best practice principles in all aspects of service delivery, with the aim of producing positive outcomes for children and young people in care.
8. Support the work of foster carers and adopters in making a difference to the care and support they provide to children and young people in care and those adopted.
9. Make sure that staff and partners commit to follow the pledges to cared for children and young people and care leavers set out in the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Governance

The Committee will:

- meet ~~bi-monthly~~quarterly;
- report to the ~~Council's Cabinet~~Children and Families Committee on at least an annual basis;
- ~~report to the Council's Scrutiny Committee annually; and~~
- involve young peoples' representatives from My Voice (Cheshire East's Children in Care Council); and
- review its terms of reference annually.

Administration

The Committee will be serviced by Democratic Services.

Minutes and agendas will be distributed and published no later than 5 clear working days prior to the meeting.

~~The meetings will take place out of school hours to enable cared for children and young people to participate.~~

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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