

# Corporate Parenting Committee

## Agenda

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**Date:** Tuesday, 1st November, 2022  
**Time:** 10.00 am  
**Venue:** Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road,  
Sandbach CW11 1HZ

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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.

It should be noted that Part 1 items of Cheshire East Council decision-making meetings are audio recorded and the recordings are uploaded to the Council's website.

### **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 - 4)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2022.

4. **Update from Shadow Committee (Verbal)**

To receive a verbal update on the Corporate Parenting Shadow Committee.

5. **Care Leaver Survey and Cared for Children Survey Report** (Pages 5 - 42)

To receive the Care Leaver Survey and the Cared for Children Survey reports.

6. **Children's Rights Annual Report** (Pages 43 - 68)

To receive the Children's Rights Annual Report.

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7. **Virtual School for Cared for Children Head Teacher's Annual Report 2021-22**  
(Pages 69 - 122)

To receive the Virtual Head Teacher's annual report.

8. **Corporate Parenting Scorecard Quarter 1** (Pages 123 - 130)

To receive the Corporate Parenting Scorecard for quarter 1.

**Membership:** Councillors Q Abel, M Asquith, R Bailey, J Barber, J Buckley, C Bulman, P Butterill, K Flavell (Chair), S Handley, S Holland, D Jefferay and J Saunders (Vice-Chair)

**CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Committee**  
held on Tuesday, 6th September, 2022 in the Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,  
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

**PRESENT**

Councillor K Flavell (Chair)

Councillors M Asquith, R Bailey, C Bulman, P Butterill, D Jefferay, M Benson and S Edgar

**ALSO PRESENT**

Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services  
Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care  
Laura Rogerson, Head of Service: Inclusion  
Georgie Fletcher, Deputy Virtual School Headteacher  
Laura McLoughlin, Social Worker  
Steve Nevitt, Care Leavers Service Manager  
Sue Pilkington, NHS Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children (joined remotely via Microsoft Teams)  
Karen Shuker, Democratic Services Officer

**42 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Buckley, Holland and Saunders.  
Cllr Councillors Benson and Edgar attended as substitutes.

**43 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**44 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING****RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

**45 UPDATE FROM SHADOW COMMITTEE (VERBAL)**

A verbal update was given on the recent A-Level and GCSE exam results for cared for children and young people. It was noted that the data was still being validated nationally and regionally so there was the potential for the figures to change. The Virtual School Headteacher's annual report would be received at the November Corporate Parenting Committee, and this would contain more data and analysis. The committee wanted to congratulate these young people on their achievements, and it was

suggested that this could be done at a celebration event which was being planned in November by the Shadow Corporate Parenting Committee.

**46 CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22**

The committee received the report which detailed the progress and achievements over 2021-22 against the pledges the Council made to cared for children and care leavers in the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

A query was raised regarding work that had been undertaken to improve dental care for cared for children and what impact this has had. The committee were advised that there had been an improvement but that it was not yet where the team wanted it to be. Data would be shared following the meeting to provide further detail.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Corporate Parenting Committee endorse the Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Report 2021-22 as set out at Appendix 1.

**47 CARE LEAVERS SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT**

The committee received the Care Leavers Service Annual Report. A number of achievements were highlighted including the number of cared for young people in apprenticeships increasing and an increase in Staying Put arrangements.

Members raised queries in relation to the cost of living crisis and assurances were given that measures were in place to support care leavers financially and practically. This was in addition to the community resources available for the care leavers to connect with if these choose to.

The committee thanked the team for the positive report.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 2.55 pm

Councillor K Flavell (Chair)



*Working for a brighter future together*

## **Corporate Parenting Committee**

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**Date of Meeting:** 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022

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

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### **1. Purpose of Report**

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

### **2. Executive Summary**

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

The themes of the survey and focus groups were:

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

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

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

The themes of the survey and focus groups were:

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

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

### **3. Recommendations**

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

#### **Care Leaver Support Service:**

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

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

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

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

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

**3.2. Employment and Education:**

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

- Mental Health
- Pregnancy/child to care for

- Location/Transport
- Current Job/Education

### **3.3. Housing, Safety and Pathway Plan**

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

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

### **3.4. Family and Health**

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

### **3.5. Preparing for Adulthood**

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

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

#### **Support from Social Workers**

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

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

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

### **3.7. Coming into Care**

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

### **3.8. Reviews and Pathway Plans**

For young people to be invited to all their reviews

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

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

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

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

### **3.9. Health**

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

Introduce leaflets before health assessments

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

Involve children and young people more in the health plan

## **4. Reasons for Recommendations**

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

## **5. Other Options Considered**

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

## **6. Background**

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



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

## **7. Consultation and Engagement**

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

## **8. Implications**

### **8.1. Legal**

- 8.1.1.** None

### **8.2. Finance**

- 8.2.1.** None

### **8.3. Policy**

- 8.3.1.** None

### **8.4. Equality**

- 8.4.1.** None

### **8.5. Human Resources**

- 8.5.1.** None

### **8.6. Risk Management**

- 8.6.1.** None

### **8.7. Rural Communities**

- 8.7.1.** None

### **8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children**

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

### **8.9. Public Health**

- 8.9.1.** None

### **8.10. Climate Change**

- 8.10.1.** None

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



Cheshire East

**TOGETHER** for Children  
and Young People

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

# Care Leavers Survey

December 2021



# Care Leavers Survey 2021 Report

## Survey Methodology:

The Care Leavers survey was conducted during October and November 2021. 76 completed surveys were received in total. The survey was accessed by young people using a website link or a paper copy. This was promoted to young people via their social workers, P.A.s, by social media platforms and newsletters. The following report includes the following:

- Responses of the survey (qualitative and quantitative data)
- Feedback and recommendations from themed focus groups as a result of the initial survey
- Pledges and actions from staff, partners and decision makers in Cheshire East that will come as a result of the survey and feedback sessions.

The aim is for this report to be a working document to ensure we can evidence change as a result of Care Leavers having a say on the services, support and decisions that affect their lives.

This survey will be repeated every 2 years to ensure that Care Leavers feel the impact of changes made.

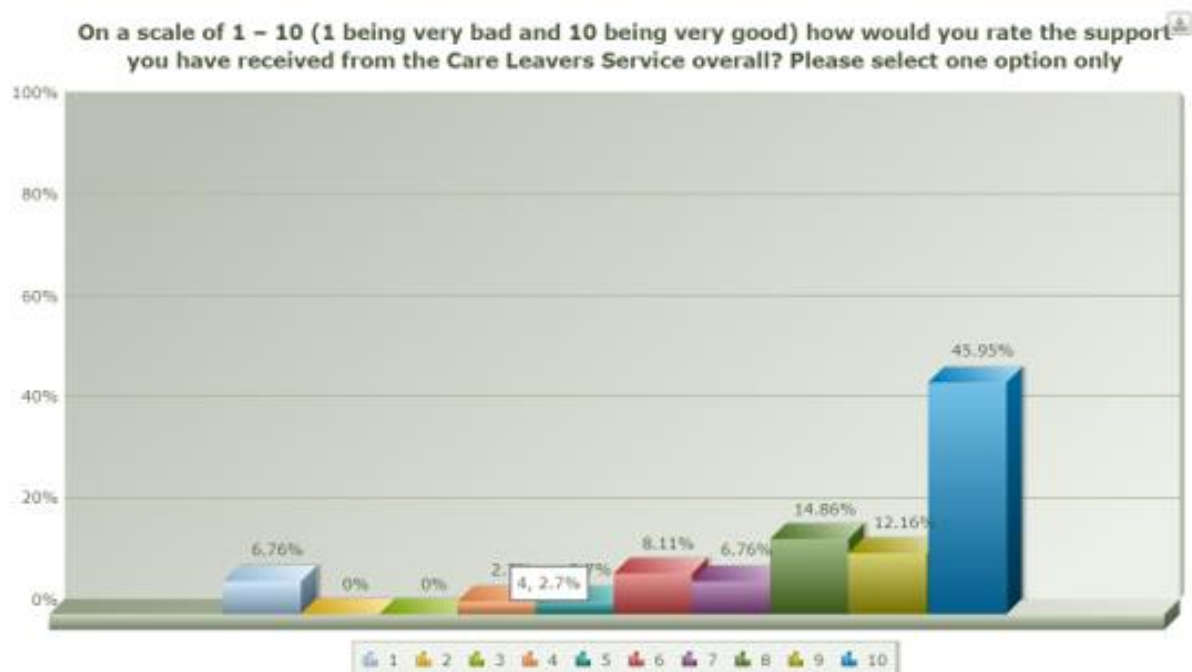


## Care Leaver Support Service Rating

Respondents were asked to rate from 1 to 10 (1 being the worst) the support they received from the Care Leaver Service.

Just under half the respondents (34 out of 74, 45.9%) rated the support 10 out of 10, with 20 out of 74 giving a rating of 7 or under.

In the 2019 Care Leavers survey (completed by 48 Care Leavers) over half of respondents (26 out of 48, 54%) rated the support 10 out of 10, with just 2 out of 48 rating the support as less than 7 out of 10.



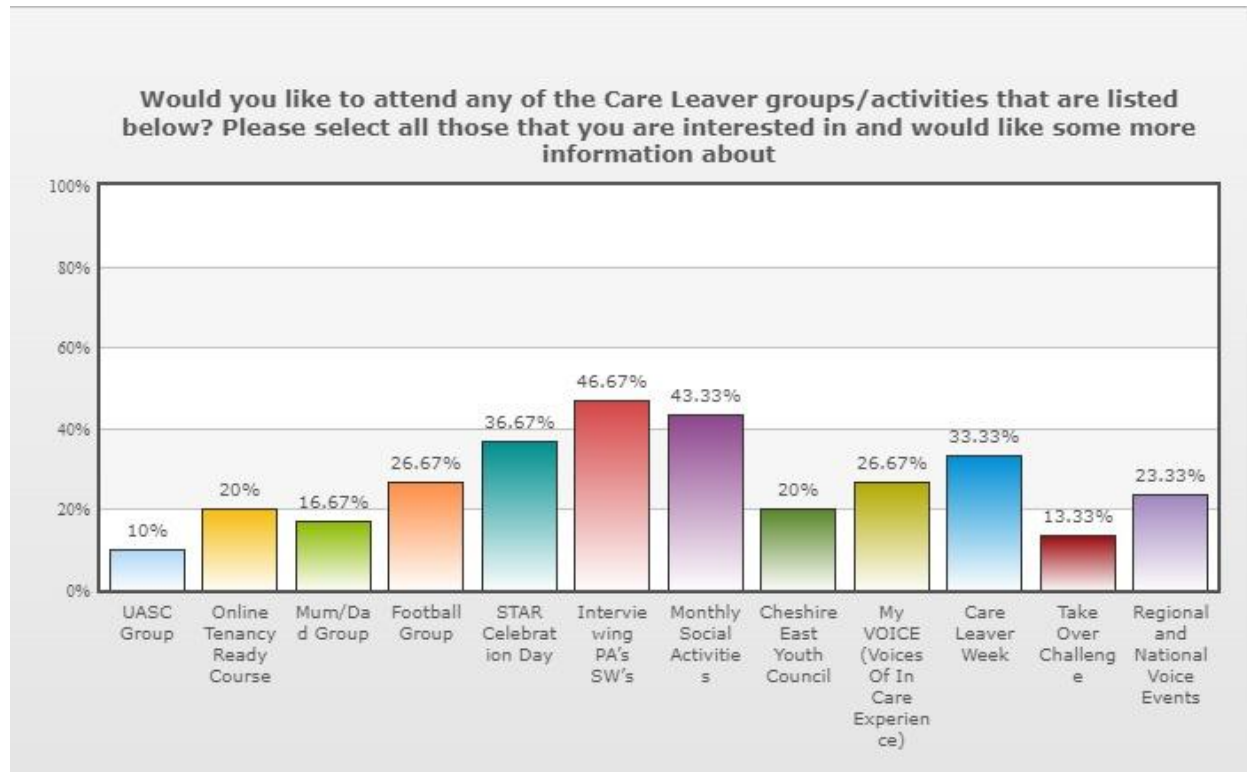
Despite the very high ratings, some respondents suggested how their score could be improved further:

- “[Name] has been really good with the support but when I have contacted a duty worker and has been difficult to get the support what I needed for that situation”
- “My social worker left and I've not had a replacement.  
I also had to chase my birthday money and travel money. I have not had my travel money reimbursed yet”
- “Pathway Plan when it should be, more support from PA and availability.”
- “more regular visits to get to know my PA”
- “more visits and communication to support me”



### Care Leavers Groups and Activities:

Respondents were asked whether they would be interested in attending any of a selection of groups and activities. "Interviewing PA's SW's" was the top choice, followed by "Monthly social activities."



Respondents were then asked what other groups/activities they would want to be available. Suggestions included:

- Celebration Event
- football in Macclesfield
- Most people who are leaving care will be at the age they may find it uncomfortable or even slightly embarrassing to go to large group events like the ones listed, a group that is smaller or even one to one with someone they know/trust but later becomes bigger could make a lot more people feel comfortable to attend, Especially people who aren't comfortable in new situations or with new people.
- Art competitions.
- friendship group





### Personal Advisor:

Respondents were asked a number of questions relating to the performance of their Personal Advisor. Overall, the results (shown in the table below) were overwhelmingly positive. In the 2019 survey it was a yes or no question. In the 2021 survey we also gave the options of neither agree nor disagree and unsure/I don't know (subsequently the 2021 figures appear lower than 2019.)

	2021	2021	2019	2019
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Do you feel listened to by your PA?	82.40%	8.20%	98%	2%
Do you feel confident contacting your PA when you need support?	83.80%	8.20%	96%	4%
Does your PA discuss and share these groups/activities with you?	68.90%	9.50%	82%	18%

Respondents to these questions were asked why they answered the way they did, the responses included the following;

- "My PA always keeps in contact with me, regularly updating me about when things are getting done"
- "Best PA ever"
- "Because I have grown to trust my pa and she has helped me in a lot of ways"
- "He very lovely to talk to make me laugh all the time and I not scared to talk to him or ask for his help."
- "she has helped me through a lot and always know if i'm stuck i can go to her."
- "I am usually quite independent, but she responds straight away if she is able to and always goes above and beyond to try and solve my needs."
- "My PA is amazing! She's always available to talk and makes time for me when I'm worried"
- "[Name] has helped me by taking me on the NEET course and getting me into college I contact him all the time when I need advice."
- "Whenever I need to contact my P.A in an emergency or if I need help with something, first she has got back to be straight away most of the time, or as soon as she can, and she has always tried to help me out to the best of her ability. She has never left me struggling, even in the hardest situations, and she has been there for me every time I have needed her support."
- "I have struggled many times with Mental Health, Housing Trouble, Food issues and more, I felt each time I was able to speak to My PA each time and trusted the advice she gave completely."



### **Recommendations from Care Leavers from themed workshop:**

- Easier accessibility to the service. If my social worker/P.A. isn't available I should know who I can contact for support and help. An alternative contact. If I contact my social worker/P.A. it can take up to 2 weeks to get a response. I think all social workers should respond within 3 working days.
- If a young person asks for something and it's not possible then social workers should have an open and honest conversation with young people about the decision and give reasons so that young people feel they have been listened to and understand why something can't happen.
- Support from P.As shouldn't just stop at 25 years of age. Young people should be assessed and only stopped when the young person is ready.
- For P.As to let young people know when they are going on annual leave and to ensure they know who they can contact in their absence.
- For P.As to check in on young people at least every 6 months even when there's been no need for any communication. Just to check in so that young people feel like the support is still there.

### **Actions and Pledges from Cheshire East as a result of recommendations:**

- Look at better forms of communication in line with needs of care leavers, improve communication/accessibility. Work with care leavers on making the service more accessible
- Involve Care Leavers in service delivery – e.g. guidelines, timescales etc.
- Introduce a Care Leaver App
- Communicate – corporate parenting – lifelong commitment





## Employment & Education

Respondents were asked multiple questions relating to employment and education. The majority of respondents were neither interested in potential work experience or an apprenticeship, and a not insignificant number of candidates felt there were barriers stopping them from getting an apprenticeship (these outcomes were the same in the survey completed in 2019.)

	Yes	No	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Unsure/Don't Know	N/A
<b>How strongly do you agree or disagree that you know how to access education, employment, training and/or apprenticeship support?</b>	90.70%	1.30%	6.70%	1.30%	N/A
<b>If you are not in education, employment or training are you aware of Journey First?</b>	33.33%	16.67%	N/A	N/A	50.00%
<b>Would you be interested in us offering you some work experience and/or an apprenticeship?</b>	42.66%	57.33%	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Are there any barriers which are stopping you from getting an apprenticeship currently?</b>	32.43%	67.57%	N/A	N/A	N/A

Following these questions, respondents were asked what barriers (if any) exist that is stopping them from getting an apprenticeship. The following are the barriers identified:

- Mental Health (8 comments)
- Pregnancy/Child to care for (4 comments)
- Location/Transport (1 comment)
- Current Job/education (5 comments)



Respondents were also asked what work experience and/or apprenticeship opportunities they would like to be available. The results are as follows:

- Childcare/Social Care (7 comments)
- Engineering (2 comment)
- Electrician (1 comment)
- Landscaping (4 comment)
- Barber/Hairdressing (2 comments)
- Baking (1 comment)
- Business (3 comments)
- I.T. (2 comments)
- Animal Care (1 comment)
- Armed Forces (1 comment)

**Recommendations from Care Leavers from themed workshop:**

No recommendations from Care Leavers at this time.

**Actions and Pledges from Cheshire East as a result of recommendations:**

- We continue to work with care leavers to expand our EET offer. We will use venture with confidence NEET programme, apprenticeship etc.



## Housing, Safety & Pathway Plan

When asked about their attitudes towards housing, respondents gave mixed results. However, questions relating to respondent's safety and their pathway plan was significantly more positive:

	2021	2021	2021	2019	2019
	Yes	No	Not sure/no response	Yes	No
Are there enough housing choices when you leave care?	45.30%	28.00%	26.70%	59%	41%
Are housing choices in Cheshire East in a good location for you?	26.00%	18.90%	55.10%	64%	36%
Do you feel safe in your home?	85.30%	5.30%	9.40%	91%	9%
If you didn't feel safe at home do you know who you would contact?	90.60%	4.10%	5.30%	93%	7%
Have you seen your pathway plan?	63.50%	13.70%	22.80%	90%	10%
Has your Pathway Plan helped you to achieve your goals in life?	47.60%	10.80%	41.60%	74%	26%

Respondents were asked to comment on how their Pathway Plan helped them achieve their goals. Alternatively, if their plan did not help them, how this could be improved:

- "It has helped me with decisions about my future"
- "They helped me a lot for any problems I had about my house and they helped me with the doctor."
- "Would like to of seen my pathway plan feels like decisions are being made behind my back"
- "It reflects what I want to achieve"
- "My pathway plan has helped me become stronger and helped me do the right things instead of the wrong"
- "I don't know what one is"
- "It gives me a plan for the next 6 months and gives me hope for the future"
- "Not got one and nearly 18."
- "My pathway plan has always given me a sense of structure to my life over the period of time between each one. I am always aware of the things that are going on and I am also able to have control over the direction i want my life to go, with the help of my P.A."



**Recommendations from Care Leavers from themed workshop:**

- When young people are being moved, we should receive regular updates so that we feel like we are being supported.
- For all young people to feel like they are being consulted about where they will be moving to.

**Actions and Pledges from Cheshire East as a result of recommendations:**

- The only circumstances when we wouldn't consult with young people is if it is an emergency
- Ignition Panel – encourage attendance, Care Leavers and professionals like it being virtual don't have to sit with professionals and spend a whole afternoon attending. Based on feedback from care leavers that they prefer it virtually.
- Pathway Plan – make it a living document, updated more regularly with each care leaver voice. Should be updated minimum every 6 months. Strive to make sure this offer is the same and consistent for all care leavers



## Family & Health

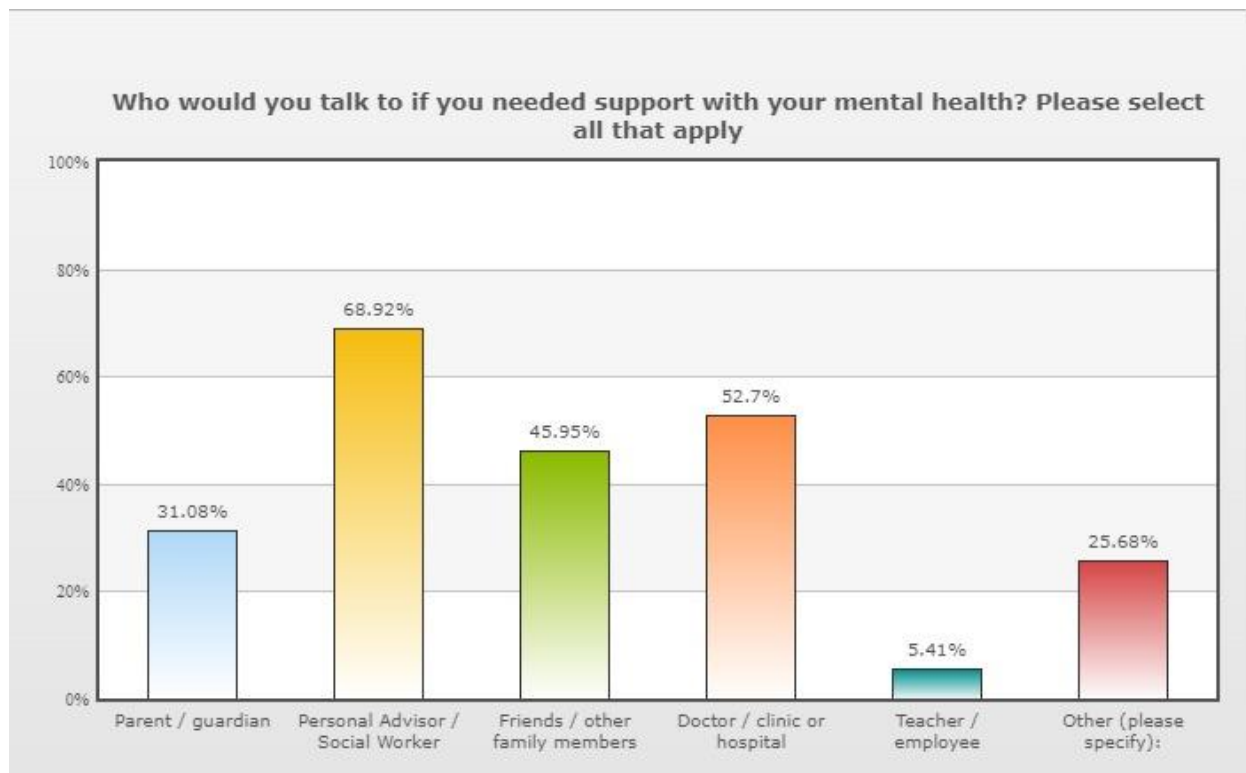
Respondents were asked a number of questions relating to their physical and mental health. Overall, the results (shown in the table below) were overwhelmingly positive. In the 2019 survey it was a yes or no question. In the 2021 survey we also gave the options of neither agree nor disagree and unsure/I don't know (subsequently the 2021 figures appear lower than 2019.)

	2021	2021	2021	2019	2019
	Yes	No	Not sure/no response	Yes	No
Do you see the family members you want to see?	83.30%	1.40%	15.30%	80%	20%
Do you feel confident in making an appointment about your health?	73.40%	14.70%	11.70%	84%	16%
Do you feel that your physical health is being made a priority?	77.40%	6.70%	15.90%	80%	20%
Do you feel that your mental health is being made a priority?	65.30%	9.40%	25.30%	100%	0%
Do you feel that you are well informed of how to make good choices regarding your health, and the local services to help you to do so?	78.70%	4%	17.3	98%	2

Respondents were asked who they would talk to if they needed support with their mental health. The following are the results:







Additionally, respondents were asked if there was any way they could be made to feel happier. The following are the comments made:

- “Be given a nice well deserved break with peace and no stress”
- “Have a PA up until you’re 25, not just until you finish education....even if it means just going for a chat and a coffee every so often as it can get lonely sometimes.”
- “Moving into my own place”
- “getting a job I enjoy a lot”
- “Find a place of my own with my unborn first child”
- “Joining a gym and practicing positive affirmations for improving self love for my mental health”
- “Getting an ADHD diagnosis”
- “better education around healthy eating”
- “Maybe go back to the gym”
- “Explain about leaving care and everything earlier.”
- “Some more activities maybe with other foster children, helps with communication and team building as I am very quiet.”



**Recommendations from Care Leavers from themed workshop:**

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

**Actions and Pledges from Cheshire East as a result of recommendations:**

- As young people move into adulthood we need to ensure that they are aware of their rights, but also understand the rights of family members that may not want to see them.
- Recommissioning emotional health and wellbeing service. Looking at ways at improving the offer. Looking at specific needs of migrant young people. The Care Leaver PAs and PureInsight offer social groups that are fantastic for wellbeing.



# Preparing for Adulthood

## Financial

When asked about their ability to pay bills and their ability to function financially, respondents answered mostly positively. In the 2019 survey it was a yes or no question. In the 2021 survey we also gave the options of neither agree nor disagree and unsure/I don't know.

	2021	2021	2021	2019	2019
	Yes	No	Not sure/no response	Yes	No
I know how to / feel that I can budget	70.20%	20.30%	9.50%	N/A	N/A
Do you know what support there is if you struggle financially?	77%	9.50%	13.50%	76%	24%
Do you feel in control of the decisions that affect your life?	85.20%	6.80%	8%	91%	9%

## Adulthood, Independence & Additional comments

Respondents were asked what could be done to help them become more independent and better transition to adulthood. The following are the comments made for both questions:

- "More dedicated services post 18 to 21. I was dealt with poorly from 18years to 20/21 resulted in a complaint"
- "When in foster care I believe young people should get more support and more guidance towards adult hood I believe some foster carers should do a bit more towards the young person to help them prepare and help them with any difficulties they may have and social workers should do more to help the young person to know there choices at an early stage etc option to where they live"
- "Nothing"
- "Have adult classes like how to cook budget and teach people about after care adult hood"
- "More support on skills to live on your own e.g. cooking classes, Classes on getting a house mortgages and leases that type of stuff."
- "More help with job"
- "Young care leavers need to be advised in good timing what support is available financially and in terms of housing so that they can make decisions ahead of time where they will be comfortable and able to feel safe and secure. This should be made a priority for them as some young adults may feel reluctant to ask or may not feel as though they are able to ask. They should be sat down





with formally and be told the pros and cons to their decisions and separate plans should be put in place for this specifically.”

- “more help with budgeting”
- “Nothing”
- “Budgeting”
- “Many life skill courses that are given to people in care can often be rushed or even skipped, Most do not actually prepare for actual adult living or are very basic I.E Can this person make food, can this person budget for a food shop, Which sound good but usually that food is a sandwich and that budgeting is for some milk etc, A more realistic approach might help or even allowing people who have been through care and dealt with those things to go over and help with what's in the Courses.”

Finally, respondents were asked if they had any further comments to make. The following are the comments made:

- “Very supportive!”
- “I think the service is good there is nothing that can be done to improve it”
- “That the social services are brilliant”
- “My Pa has helped me with alot in short space of time and helped me when I've had no one to turn to. I'll always be grateful”

**Recommendations from Care Leavers from themed workshop:**

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

**Actions and Pledges from Cheshire East as a result of recommendations:**

Independence packs available from the age of 14

Foster Carers to engage and use independence packs

Young people who are placed out of access can still gain access

Tenancy Readiness Course kept online and accessible – improved rates of completion – accepted in lieu of a reference for housing

Cost of living – working with council and partners to seek additional funding to support care leavers during winter



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## Care Leaver Survey Action Plan

October 2022

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Cheshire East

**TOGETHER** for Children  
and Young People

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

# Cared for Children Survey

June 2022



# Cared For Children Survey 2022 Report

## Survey Methodology:

The Cared for Children's survey took place from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022 until 17<sup>th</sup> June 2022. 80 surveys were submitted and of those 47 were completed surveys were received. The survey was accessed by children, young people and their carers using a website link or QR codes. This was promoted to children, young people and their carers via their social workers, IROs, by social media platforms and newsletters. We also hosted a range of activities, drop-in sessions and 123 children, young people and carers were contacted on the telephone. This was done to offer opportunities to as many Cared for Children as possible so that they can shape services and to be as inclusive as possible. The survey was completed by children, young people and carers advocating for young people. The survey was for young people from newborn up to the age of 18 years old. We made it accessible by offering virtual and paper copies, we did group sessions for discussions, early years sessions. We did easy scaling questions and using emoji scaling questions. Young people had been involved in the design of the survey.

## Aims of the Survey:

- To give children and young people the opportunity to have their voices heard
- To give children and young people the opportunity to shape the service and support they receive
- To improve services for all children and young people that are cared for

The following report summarises responses to this survey:

## On a scale of 1-10 (1 being rubbish and 10 being fantastic) how would you rate the support you have received from your Social Worker?

Here are the results of this question with a comparison to last year's survey (green highlights an improvement, amber highlights the same score, red highlights less):

Score	2021	2022
10/10	43%	25.5%
6-9/10	39.3%	42.6%
5/10 and below	17.7%	32%

## How could this score be improved?

- Better communication on plans moving forward



- Idea on what is happening or potentially going to happen
- Phone email anything is better than nothing
- Getting info second hand is not conducive to a good working relationship
- Listen more
- actually speak to him
- volume of work for staff
- Communication so I know what's going on. Unanswered calls from social worker
- being on the end of the phone when I need it, whatever issue I need.
- answering email quickly
- More contact from support.
- More communication.
- More communication with regards to the child's plans
- Honesty. Keeping to commitments. Social worker let us down
- More communication. Less change of social workers.
- Actually listening to the children.
- better communication but understand how busy she is.
- respond quicker
- doesn't listen to me, have to repeat everything to him that i have told my teacher
- faster coming back to voicemails
- to have seen/spoken to the social worker more than once since 4 months.  
being able to get in touch with her. I left a message for my social worker 12 days ago and not heard of her yet and today's the 30th.
- I don't know. I'm not sure he understands what his social worker is for.
- Coming more often
- good social worker for the child, maybe a little more transparency
- ambivalent attachment disorder nothing is ever perfect from child's perspective
- Better communication. I have to do a lot of chasing to get answers to questions.  
Also chasing nursery fees all the time too.
- the help has not been good. when I've asked them to find out information (contact times and date, court dates) and she never got back with either of them despite saying she would email when she got to the office.
- they didn't tell me what I was entitled to financially and I had to fight them for what I was entitled to.
- Not enough contact with social worker. Child really upset about that. More contact.  
No response from social worker
- My social worker keeps changing and my family contact is poor

### Positive comments about Social Workers:

- EXCELLENT STANDARD OF SUPPORT. KNOWN FOR 7 YEARS. WORKING TIRELESSLY
- No, good social worker
- At the moment she's being listened to.
- Always there if we need her. Child knows she can contact her.
- Large improvement compared to previous social worker





- No, excellent social worker

### Do you feel listened to by your Social Worker?

Score	2021	2022
Always	67.5%	57.45%
Sometimes	26.2%	31.91%
Never	6.3%	10.64%

### Do you feel confident in contacting your Social Worker?

Score	2021	2022
Always	63.2%	54.35%
Sometimes	21.1%	30.43%
Never	15.8%	15.22%

#### Recommendations from Cared for Children from themed workshop:

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

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

Make children and young people aware of what they are entitled to e.g. when coming into care, complaints, gym memberships etc

#### Actions and Pledges from Cheshire East as a result of recommendations:

Communicate with children and young people within 48 hours of them contacting you

Contact children and young people when going on leave with return dates and duty number

Placement planning meetings to take place within 3 working days of children coming into care

### When coming into care was it clearly explained to you what was happening?

Score	2021	2022
Yes	27.6%	32.61%
Unsure/Don't Know	42.1%	41.3%
No	30.3%	26.09%





### Do you know what a Cared for Review/Pathway Plan Review is?

Score	2021	2022
Yes	72.7%	57.45%
No	27.3%	42.55%

### Do you attend your Cared for Review/Pathway Plan Reviews?

Score	2021	2022
Yes	30.4%	34.04%
Sometimes	44.3%	31.91%
No	25.3%	34.04%

### What do you gain from attending your Cared for Review/Pathway Plan Reviews?

- been able to have a say
- Information
- i know whats going on in the future
- hearing what my teachers have to say
- background and bigger picture for the child
- I know what people talk about my plan and what is happening
- I get to say the changes i want to happen and say what's going well. I don't always attend because I get put on the spot and don't always know what a meeting is for. I have been listened to because I got to see my mum when I asked to.
- What's happening in the future
- likes the positive feedback
- To see what's happening next for the child
- Knowledge of what's going on in his life. Being able to speak out and ask questions.
- A bit of clarity and a bit of upset. Still processing it.
- I know what's going on in my life
- I don't feel as worried as what the next step is.
- Other people's opinions. I am doing the best thing for the foster carer and having my views listened to
- I know what I need to improve on and what's going well.
- seeing her parents, being placed at the centre of attention
- gets her voice heard. Started to say about what she's feeling. Social worker linked to both siblings, so this helped connection
- not sure, I do feel better. I feel listened to
- Feels included re decisions
- I got the school money sorted out attending those meetings



- Important information that assists with the care of the child, and to help support them.
- Gets to say what she wants but doesn't always get what she wants.
- The support she needs

### If you don't attend your Cared for Review/Pathway Plan Reviews, why not?

- don't know what they are
- Never had one
- not had one yet
- doesn't want to. Confidence
- Not interested
- wouldn't understand
- not sure why. Could be because of their ages
- in school or too young
- I don't want to see my mum and she is there
- He's never been invited
- Because I have not been invited
- never been invited.
- Never been involved in that

### How can we support Children and young people to attend their Cared for Review/Pathway Plan Reviews?

- Never had one. Feels service is all rubbish. Organising is rubbish. No communication. Poor planning. No response. Cancelling end of year review. Ticking boxes and paperwork. Sent on courses that aren't relevant. Feels not looking at the happiness of the child
- Us and social worker explaining the transition coming in next few years. And communicate via birth family
- no would lead to a lot of confusion. So much going with family and siblings
- don't let my mum go
- Invite me and have it when I'm not at school
- Invite me
- tell me when it is. invite me to attend
- Let me know when they are

### Do you feel listened to at your Cared for Review/Pathway Plan Reviews?

Score	2021	2022
Always	70.2%	61.29%
Sometimes	26.3%	32.26%
Never	3.5%	6.45%



It's important to note here that in both 2021 and 2022 only 2 responses states that they never felt listened to. But as the sample for the 2022 survey was lower it has a higher percentage.

### Is there anything your Independent Review Officer (IRO) can do to make your reviews better?

- Information to my foster carer E.g. if something changes or is cancelled.  
You cannot give too much info/communication
- if I could see a copy of my cared for plan
- I don't know who they are
- see me more often
- Take more notice of what the family are saying. When child gone missing feels that not been followed up properly when child was in their care. Quick to point the fingers at the family
- Looking at alternative methods of communication for child with autism/additional needs. Direct q's not helpful. Only sees twice a year so no rapport
- She was initially going to come before but then cancelled.  
she then said shed visit after but not happened.  
would have been better if the visit beforehand had actually happened.
- no not really
- Child puts forward her views but frustrated with limitations

### Positive comments about IROs:

- No she's a funny person. Dawn Walker is my IRO. I'd like things to be explained better - like what meetings are for
- Not really quite happy with how things are
- Only had one review so far. She was great. Sticking up for us
- I don't think there's much she can do to make them better.
- no happy with them
- no, hes great and positive.
- IRO is excellent goes above and beyond
- Our reviews with the IRO have always gone well. Any issues raised at the time have always been addressed.
- no great



**Recommendations from Cared for Children from themed workshop:**

For young people to be invited to all their reviews

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

Provide copies of reviews and plans to children and young people, make communication accessible

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

Improve coming into care e.g. communication, support, visit/family time

**Actions and Pledges from Cheshire East as a result of recommendations:**

Training for staff around pathway plans, ensuring child-centered plans are written

Family time - new policy being launched very soon to ensure a consistent approach across Cheshire East

Consult with children and young people about appropriate spaces and methods of communication for each meeting about them

Further consultation about appropriate spaces for family time

## Your Health

	2021	2021	2021	2022	2022	2022
	Yes	No	Unsure/Don't know	Yes	No	Unsure/don't know
I have someone to talk to if I have concerns/problems with my health	87.34%	5.06%	7.6%	87.23%	2.13%	10.64%
I have had a health assessment	79.75%	1.26%	18.99%	78.72%	10.64%	10.64%
I know what a health assessment is	73.42%	11.39%	15.19%	78.72%	12.77%	8.51%
I know who my School Nurse or	55.13%	28.21%	16.66%	38.30%	40.43%	21.28%



specialist Cared for Nurse is						
I know how to contact the Cared for Children's Health team	29.49%	46.15%	24.36%	27.66%	59.57%	12.77%
I am involved with writing my health plan	35.44%	29.11%	35.44%	19.15%	48.94%	31.91%

### Would you like to have a leaflet to read before a health assessment?

Score	2021	2022
Yes	22.8%	39.13%
Unsure/Don't know	27.8%	23.91%
No	49.4%	36.96%

### Would you like to be more involved with your health plan?

Score	2021	2022
Yes	28.6%	38.3%
Unsure/Don't know	29.9%	25.53
No	41.6%	36.17%

### Is there was anything that the Cared for Health Team / Cared for Nurse can do to help young people be more healthy?

- moving from east to west. communication has fallen down between the two.. let down by Education system between the 2 boroughs. health needs met but very slow and some appointments not offered
- No lost faith
- let me know i can have a free gym membership
- introduce themselves. Carer didn't know they existed
- speaking to them
- yes, my little boy is ill and hes been in hospital so many times. hes still not had a diagnosis.  
I need someone to advocate for me and find out if there is somethings wrong with him so that we can help him.





- unsure yet as first review is booked but taken place

**Recommendations from Cared for Children from themed workshop:**

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

Introduce leaflets before health assessments

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

Involve children and young people more in the health plan

**Actions and Pledges from Cheshire East as a result of recommendations:**

CPOG to consider leaflets, information and consultation in coming to care

Promote local offer at all events for cared for children and review regularly with cared for children

**Anything Else**

The final part of the survey asked if there was anything else the young people would like to tell us. Their responses were:

- As previous page  
Need to tailor for different age ranges in all aspects of their process there is not a one size fits all from birth to 18  
From our assessment process as carers to these questionnaires  
Need to communicate much better
- Change of social worker made a big difference. lack of knowledge transferred about his needs.
- No. Not a big fan of Cared For support
- to involved the child more before a plan is put into place. So they are kept informed
- Excellent service for S/ services as know social worker a long time
- Could do with more updates about the future as getting confused seeing family members



- More financial support.  
Being threatened with returning back to residential as not attending school.  
Massively let down by social services
- based on the first social worker she didn't support me and got to know us before she judged us. no contact unable to get hold of her. Feel there was little concern. Feel totally unsupported. Alleged Social worker lied to police about carers behaviour and making up stories about incident at hospital. Lots of feedback of bad practice on social workers' behalf.
- children want to keep knowing when their brother is coming home
- i want people to listen to me and not make me see my mum
- no, just a general shortage of social workers and their workloads. more social workers would be good.
- timescales - my case should have been closed last October - social services weren't giving the right information by the right dates and communication was bad so court cases kept being pushed back.
- Children find additional input annoying. They're teenagers and not that interested but go along with meetings etc as a matter of course
- She's happy. Knows she has good support in place
- I felt pressured to have contact with his mum at my house because I am his aunty. I feel this should be his safe place and they pressured me to do it here
- lack of communication

**Recommendations from Cared for Children from themed workshop:**

To know about all services – like the apprenticeship help from Duncan Allen. I wouldn't have known if I didn't attend My Voice and they did a referral.

**Actions and Pledges from Cheshire East as a result of recommendations:**

Develop catalogue for young people of services and support, easy access for cared for children



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Cared for Children Survey Action Log

October 2022

Date Action Set	Section of Survey	Action	Who	By when	Update	Progress RAG
04/10/22	Support from Social Worker	communicate within 48 hours	Kayleigh Wilshaw	30/11/22	practice and performance during November - roll out actions and pledges	
04/10/22	Support from Social Worker	contact children and young people when going on leave with return dates and duty number	Kayleigh Wilshaw	30/11/22	practice and performance during November - roll out actions and pledges	
04/10/22	Support from Social Worker	placement planning meetings to take place within 3 working days of children coming into care	Kayleigh Wilshaw	30/11/22	practice and performance during November - roll out actions and pledges	
04/10/22	Coming into care, plans and reviews	Training for staff around pathway plans, ensuring child centered plans are written	Kayleigh Wilshaw	30/11/22	caring for children performance reviews, communicate with service manager for IROs to ensure consistent service/quality/communication	
04/10/22	Coming into care, plans and reviews	Family time - new policy being launched	Kayleigh Wilshaw	01/11/22	Ensuring consistent approach from staff across CE	
04/10/22	Coming into care, plans and reviews	Consult with children and young people about appropriate spaces and methods of communication for each meeting about them	Rachel Kenyon	01/11/22		
04/10/22	Coming into care, plans and reviews	Further consultation about appropriate spaces for family time	Sarah Edwards	31/12/22		
04/10/22	Your Health	CPOG to consider leaflets, information and consultation in coming to care	CPOG	31/01/23		
04/10/22	Your Health	Promote local offer at all events for cared for children and review regularly with cared for children	All staff, partners, committee	ongoing		
04/10/22	Anything Else	Develop catalogue for young people of services and support, easy access	CPOG	31/05/23		

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*Working for a brighter future together*

## Corporate Parenting Committee

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	01 November 2022
<b>Report Title:</b>	Children's Rights Annual Report 2021 - 2022
<b>Ward(s) Affected:</b>	All

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### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Children's Society delivers the Children's Rights Advocacy and Independent Visiting Service for Cheshire East. This Annual Report will advise the Corporate Parenting Committee of how The Children's Society has delivered the service over the year, providing an overview of the work undertaken from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.
- 1.2. The report also provides information on Advocacy and Independent Visiting for children and young people.
- 1.3. The Advocacy Service ensures that children and young people are aware of, and able to access, appropriate services, advice and information which empowers them to ensure their views and wishes are heard and reflected in the decision making about their lives.
- 1.4. The Independent Visitor provision provides a befriending service for children and young people who are cared for and have little or no meaningful contact with their parents, as provided for in the Children Act 1989.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to:
  - Note the contents of the annual report.
  - Scrutinise the service delivery information from The Children's Society Annual Report as set out in the Appendix.

### 3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. The Corporate Parenting Committee is an advisory group to the Children and Families Committee 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.

#### 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 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021. The Children's Society has delivered the service to children and young people in terms of Advocacy and Independent Visiting since December 2013, the contract went up for re commissioning in 2019 and The Children's Society won the contract again, it runs from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024.
- 5.2. The Children Act 2004, gives local authorities a duty to ascertain children's wishes and feelings and give due consideration to them when decisions are being made about a child's care. The report gives data on the number of referrals made to the service, in terms of advocacy and which cohort of children and young people requested an advocate, and the reason for the request. The detail on the delivery and impact is given in the report
- 5.3. Independent Visitors there is a statutory duty for all local authorities to provide advocacy services and independent visitors for vulnerable children and young people, the report gives data on the number of Independent visitor referrals we received and how many matches we have where a young person is matched with one of our volunteers. The contract target is 20 matches at any one time. The detail on the delivery and impact is given in the report.
- 5.4. The Children and Young People Children and Young Persons Act 2008 extended the statutory requirement to provide an Independent Visitor service to any child or young person in care not just those where communication between the child and a parent or person with parental responsibility has been infrequent or where they have not visited the child in care in the preceding twelve months. The report shares the recruitment and training we deliver to volunteers to ensure we have sufficient volunteers to be matched.

#### 6. Consultation and Engagement

- Engagement and working together with stakeholders (particularly Service Users) are core principles within the Service and are embedded within the service practice to ensure that children and young people feel valued and listened too. The service Manager was part of a Task and Finish group within The Children's Society to develop a definition and guide for **what Advocacy is in the Children's Society**, this was developed and all workers within The Children's Society have this as a framework (see page 5 of the annual report)
- 6.1.

- 6.2.** As an advocacy service we are continually listening to the voices of children and young people and are able to gather themes and issues that we feedback to the LA on a regular basis to ensure any improvements can be discussed or made that will make it better for children and young people. From this came a task and finish group with colleagues from the LA to discuss how best we can work together, and we developed a webinar to share with colleagues.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1. Legal**

- 7.1.1.** There are no direct legal implications of this report.

### **7.2. Finance**

- 7.2.1.** There are no direct financial implications of this report. The Local Authority commissioner the service to provide the Children's Rights Service.

### **7.3. Policy**

- 7.3.1.** There are no direct policy implications of this report.

### **7.4. Equality**

- 7.4.1.** There are no direct equality implications of this report

### **7.5. Human Resources**

- 7.5.1.** Our HR department and senior leadership team were very supportive to staff during Covid 19, we had robust risk assessments for work with children, young people carers and colleagues. All staff were offered mental health support and how to keep themselves safe and well.

### **7.6. Risk Management**

- 7.6.1.** The Children's Society has robust risk assessments for our work and service delivery. 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.

### **7.7. Rural Communities**

- 7.7.1.** The service does work with a number of out of borough children and young people if they are the responsibility of the LA. For the period April 2021-March 2022 we worked with:
- 32 Out of Borough Advocacy children & young people cases.
  - 15 Out of Borough Independent Visitor children & young people cases
  - An Independent Visitor is especially important for children and young people who are placed in rural communities to ensure they are given the

same social, health and resource opportunities as all other cared for children in borough

## **7.8. Children and 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. The report shares information on the many developments we carried out in 2021 to ensure the most vulnerable children and young people were given the opportunity to have an advocate or an Independent visitor.
- 7.8.2. Referral numbers had steadily and systematically increased over the past 3 years but in 2021 was very slightly lower than the previous year. There are currently no waiting lists for the Advocacy service with referrals actioned promptly and in timescale. In terms of Independent Visiting during 2021 we did have a waiting list for children and young people waiting for a match with an Independent Visitor. The table below reflects the historic and current dataset of the number of cared for children in Cheshire East and those subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP). With numbers increasing, mainly due to abuse and long-term neglect, it is imperative that children and young people continue to feel supported, empowered and their voice central to any decisions made about them.
- 7.8.3. In terms of Independent Visiting, nationally numbers of referrals are low. To address this, in February 2021 a national campaign was launched to raise the profile of the Independent Visiting Service for cared for children. Nationally in England there are only 3.3% of cared for children who have an Independent Visitor.

Year	Number of cared for children	Number of children subject to a child protection plan	Number of children referred to Advocacy Service	Number of children referred to IV Service
March 2018 - April 2019	485	268	64	7
March 2019 - April 2020	534	253	77	10
March 2020 - April 2021	518	236	89	13
March 2021- April 2022			87	11

**7.9. Public Health**

- 7.9.1. Many of the children and young people supported during this year have spoken to us about their mental health or their parents' mental health and how this is affecting them (see page 15 of the report) which we have shared with the LA.

**7.10. Climate Change**

- 7.10.1. Many of the children and young people supported during this period live outside of the borough; we ensured they had an advocate or an Independent visitor and recruited for volunteers in their local area to ensure funding was allocated to the activities and not on mileage, and the volunteers know the local area.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Sue Preston, Service Manager The Children's Society <a href="mailto:sue.preston@childrenssociety.org.uk">sue.preston@childrenssociety.org.uk</a> <u>Office 0161 763 2170</u> <u>Mobile 07734072245</u>
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Children's Rights Annual Report 2021-2022
Background Papers:	None



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# **Children's Rights Annual Report**

## **Cheshire East**

### **April 2021 to March 2022**



Cheshire Children's Rights Annual report April 2021 – March 2022 Sue Preston Service Manager

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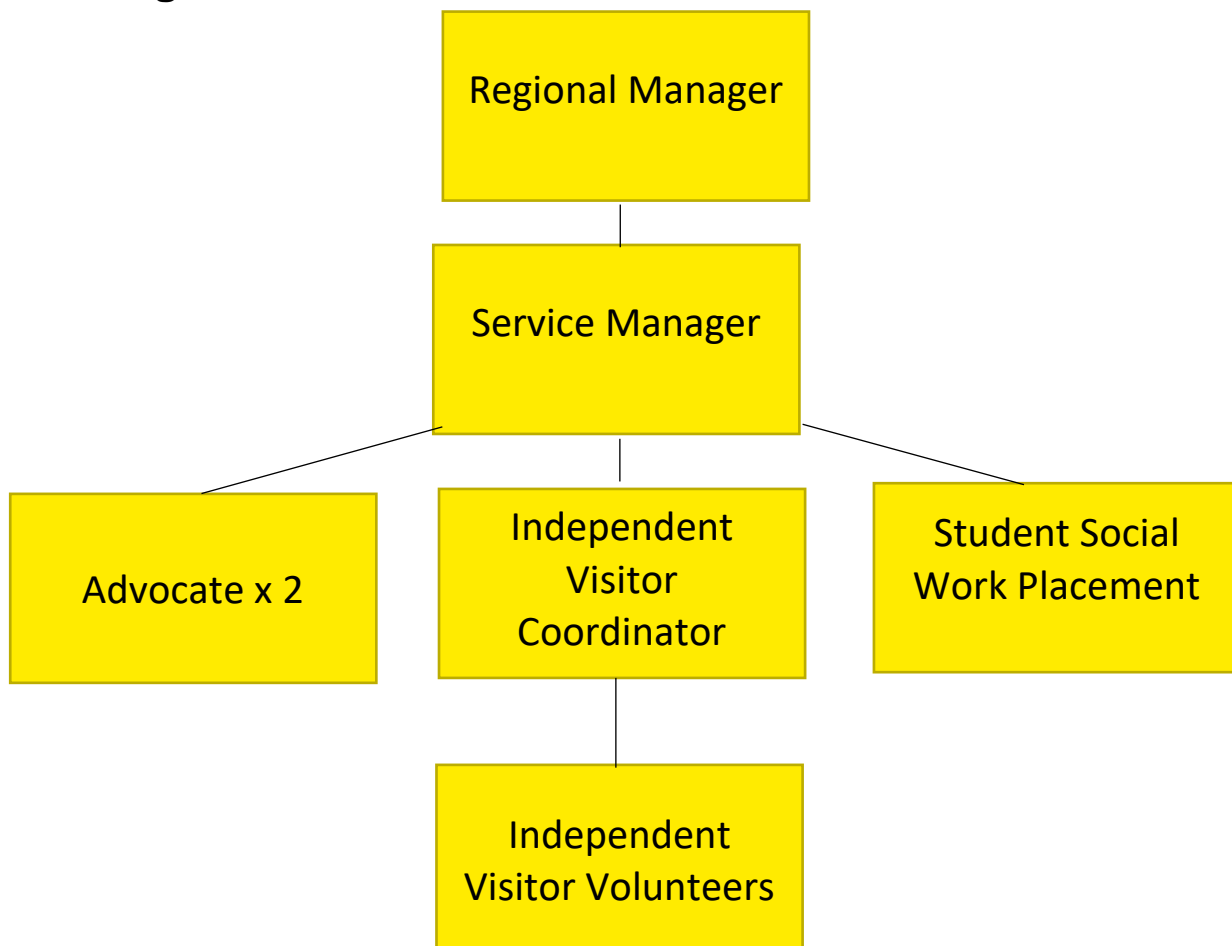
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## Introduction:

The Children's Society is commissioned to deliver the Children's Rights Advocacy and Independent Visiting Service for Cheshire East Local Authority. The Children's Society have held the contract since November 2014 and were re-commissioned in October 2019 for 5 years.

This annual report provides an overview of the work undertaken between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

### Staffing Structure:



## Our Achievements last year

### What we said we would develop last year

Host student Social Work placement to support the advocacy and IV service as well as offering them the skills and experience to become a great Social Worker. The team hosted 2 Social Work (MA) students last year, with both Salford and Chester University both praising the service on how much a student can learn from the placement.

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Work collaboratively with Cheshire East colleagues to ensure partnership working and better communication, develop more webinars about the service and support offer to share with colleagues. The team developed a webinar to share with colleagues in Social Care and in Schools, to raise awareness of the service and to demonstrate how the teams can work in partnership, this was shared at the Virtual School training day in June 2021 for Designated teachers and shared with Stephen Pepper a Service Manager in Social care and Jenny Brown a Child Protection Independent Reviewing Officer to share with social care. A Power Point presentation was also sent in to be used at the Taboo Conference and was sent to new staff as part of their induction

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Develop a blended approach to the support offer, ensuring all children and young people have the choice to how they would like the service to work for them. At the start of the work the team asked the children and young people how they would like the service to work for them with many happy to continue virtual contact as well as engaged in face-to-face visits in café's, parks, wherever the young person feels the most comfortable.

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Promote the service with colleagues and ensure all are aware of who they can refer, especially children in a Private Fostering arrangement or homeless 16- and 17-year-olds. The team promoted the service at Children's Trust, CPOG, cared for team meeting and Preparation for adulthood meetings which resulted in 5 referrals for children subject to a Private Fostering arrangement and one for homeless 16- and 17-year-olds.

Promote the Independent Visiting service to ensure all those children and young people who want an Independent Visitor are offered one. The team promoted the Independent Visiting service at various meetings the Service Manager attended within the LA which resulted in 11 referrals into the service.

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Continue to share our national resources with colleagues in the local authority and other services who work with children and young people. The team shared various resources with our colleagues either at team meetings or sending the links to the resources via email the resources include the Good Childhood report 2021, First Port of Call The role of GPs in young people's mental health, as our service and many others were hearing more and more young people being affected by mental health

## **Our achievements internally:**

- The Service Manager was part of a Task and Finish group within The Children's Society to develop a definition and guide for **what Advocacy is in the Children's Society**, this was developed and all workers within The Children's Society have this as a framework

The framework listed three types of advocacy within The Children's Society:

- **Self-Advocacy** - should be a goal for all services. Service users who are informed, skilled and empowered to be able to advocate for themselves have, inevitably, increased protective factors and resilience.
- **Individual Advocacy** – where practitioners provide advocacy support to an individual to ensure their rights are secured and/or their views/voices are heard in decision making.
- **Systems Advocacy** – where practitioners and programmes seek to use the views of those with lived experience to impact on wider systems and structures – within TCS Systems Advocacy is clearly linked to the organisation's Systems Change work.
- The Children's Society have a Growing Together campaign, which the organisation does monthly and one of our advocates did a 'Day in the Life of...' Spotlight in February 2022 These are interactive sessions offering a personal perspective of colleagues working and volunteering in The Children's Society and is aimed at all our work force not only those in youth impact but in retail and policy.



## Practice Standards

- In February 2022, the organisation finalised a set of Practice Standards which set out our commitment, to children and young people regardless of who they are, what service they might access, where in the country they live so that they all should expect and receive the same basic approach from The Children's Society
- These standards have relevance across all domains in the organisation they help guide our engagement with young people, whether that's direct contact, what we write about them and how we represent their views and experiences.
- The standards fit firmly within a rights-based approach, so link directly with the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child, and the experience and knowledge of years of our work with children and young people.

**The service work to the following Practice Standards.** There are 10 standards in all which cover a young person's engagement with us from the beginning to the end.

**The  
Children's  
Society**

### Practice Standards

Young people choose to work with us	Young people's view of their experiences is central
Young people are valued and treated with respect	Young people are supported to develop their understanding skills and expectations
Young people are supported to develop stronger relationships	Young people are supported to have a strong and positive sense of their own identity
Young people are supported to express their views and opinions and have them listened to	Young people's lived experiences contribute to wider systems change
Young people are safeguarded and supported to have risk reduced in their lives	Young people are supported towards positive endings

## What is advocacy

Advocacy is offering support and information to children and young people, empowering them to ensure their rights are respected, their views and wishes heard and reflected in decision-making about their lives. Ideally the best person to advocate for a child or young person could be their carer, Social Worker, Teacher, Personal Adviser but sometimes an independent person is needed.

The team offer Independent Issue Based Advocacy ensuring there are effective pathways to hear their voice and resolve issues at the earliest stage.

Our criteria of children and young people include the following:

Cared for by Local Authority (0-17)

Care Leavers (18-25)

Have a disability (0-18 and up to 25 if in transition to adult services)

Homeless 16–17-year-old

In a Private Fostering Arrangement

Asylum seekers or refugees

Subject to a Child Protection Plan

Those wanting to make a complaint against a social care service



Advocates usually meet young people at home or at school, but will always ask young people where they would feel most comfortable talking. Sometimes advocates will go for a coffee or a walk with a young person if this is what they would prefer to do.'

## Advocacy Referrals

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 we had 87 referrals for advocacy:

Number of eligible children and young people who were referred to the Advocacy Service

Child Status	April 2021 – March 2022	April 2020 – March 2021	April 2019 – March 2020
Cared for child (including 6 placed with parents under an Interim Care Order)	45	59	36
Care Leaver	9	11	8
Child with a disability	9	7	12
Child on Child Protection (CP) Plan & Child in Need (CIN) (6 CP & 2 CIN)	8	8	14
Asylum Seeking child	9	2	4
Child or young person making a complaint	0	1	1
Homeless 16/17-year-old	1	1	0
Child or young person in a Private Fostering arrangement	5	0	0
Inappropriate referral	1	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>77</b>

Of the 87 referrals, 20 of them were re referrals back into the service for another issue, which included 4 young people self-referring into the service. This shows a positive indication that the young people felt happy to ask for advocacy support again with a new issue. Several of the re referrals are where a young person has wanted an advocate to represent them at their care planning meeting only and then we have closed the work and re-opened for the next care planning meeting

During the same period in **Cheshire West & Chester** we received 70 Advocacy referrals plus 22 open cases which were transferred when we took on the contract in April 21.

## Deep Dive of Advocacy referrals

Of the referrals these were the following issues that the advocates worked on with the children and young people:

Issue:	Quantity:	Examples include:
Representation	21	Issue with Social Worker, Feel not being listened to
Placement	11	Including placement moves
Contact issues	11	Young people wanting more contact
Parent & Baby	10	Ensuring the parents are listened to and supported
Representation at meetings	9	Cared for meetings, PEP meetings
Child Protection Representation	6	Representation at CP conference reviews
Complaint	5	See breakdown below
Legal	5	Age assessment, Change of name, Asylum claim
Transition	4	Support from children's care to adult social care
Education Placement	3	Young people wanting a different school
Access to records	1	Young person wanting to see their
Inappropriate referral	1	Child in Need
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	

4 issues were classified as complaints. The issues highlighted in complaints and the outcomes were as follows:

Letter box contact: the young person now has letter box contact, which is more personal, see Advocacy case study

A young person in placement who submitted a complaint regarding another young person being placed in the foster home as well. She decided to put the complaint on hold as she was busy with studies and the other young person was no longer living there.

A child who felt unfairly treated compared to her peers' protective factors that had been put in place. Some were justified, but some the young person felt were not needed. A complaint was sent in and the opportunity to meet with the team manager. The issues were rectified, and her voice was heard, and young person was happy with the outcome

One young person wanted to make a complaint against her former Foster Carers This did not progress to a complaint when the team spoke to her, and she decided she no longer wanted advocacy

## Independent Visiting

The concept “Independent Visitors” (IV) originated from government reports into safeguards for vulnerable children living away from home, which stressed the importance of providing **an ongoing relationship with an adult who was independent from the Local Authority**. The role of the IV was introduced as a **statutory service for looked after children** in the Children Act 1989.

**An Independent Visitor is a volunteer who is matched with a child in care** aged between 8 – 18 years of age. They are a trained volunteer, who is uniquely placed to provide care-experienced children and young people with emotional support and stability. Independent Visitors offer the chance for children in care to build a “trusting, positive relationship with a trained volunteer. We ask volunteers to commit to 2 years. The service has a KPI target of 20 matches at any one time.

All the volunteers are trained and inducted before they start volunteering with the service. The training covers; safeguarding, confidentiality, the role of an Independent Visitor, the Care System and relationship building. All volunteers are required to engage in group support meetings and supervision. The service offers group support meetings and one to one session for all volunteers and very often speakers are invited in to share information or deliver a training session with volunteers to continue their professional development.

This year the service facilitated Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) training to the volunteers by making use of a skilled wider team within The Children's Society.

- **The team kept in touch with those children and young people on the waiting list for an Independent Visitor**, and at any one time we could have between 4 – 8 young people on the waiting list. There has been regular communication via phone calls to the children and young people to them, **making sure they do not feel forgotten**. The team have also sent activities in the post to keep them engaged. The regular phone calls also present as an opportunity for the young person to highlight any pressing issues which they may be worried about so if we need to consider a specialist volunteer this can be considered.



## Independent Visitor referrals

From April 2021 to March 2022, the service received 11 referrals for an Independent Visitor:

Year	April 2021 – March 2022	April 2020 – March 2021	April 2020 – March 2021
Referrals	11	13	10

During the same period in **Cheshire West & Chester** we received 21 Independent Visitor referrals plus 21 cases which were transferred when we took on the contract in April 21.

Of those 11 referrals:

- 9 were new young people into the service and 2 were re-matches, so young people who had an IV but the match ended and so were re referred for another IV
- 9 children and young people have a disability or specific need as in emotional need, self-esteem, or low confidence,
- 7 children and young people were out of Borough in the following areas: Bury, Walsall, Stoke on Trent, Hyde, Ipstones, Manchester and Newcastle
- 7 lived in Foster Care, 1 in residential, 1 in supported living, 1 in residential/hospital and 1 with parents.

**During April 21 to March 2022, we supported 21 matches and the relationships have spanned anything from 1 to 6 years.** We are proud of this statistic as it shows the longevity of support provided, as well as suggesting that the **children/young people value the relationship** and want to continue to see their IV long-term.

However, although this is positive for those young people who have an Independent Visitor, our resources and capacity would be stretched if we were also able to match all those on the waiting list as well. We have discussed this with our commissioners and are in discussions, looking at possible extra funding, checking if those on the waiting list anything has changed and do the young people still require an IV, and looking at exit strategies for some young people if appropriate.



## Independent Visitor case study

The young person was referred to the service for an Independent Visitor. They had an Education, Health, Care Plan for social and emotional difficulties and wanted an IV to support them to engage in some different activities and to provide them with someone (apart from school and carers / social worker) to talk to.

The young person was matched with an Independent Visitor in 2020 during Lock down, so they only met virtually for a few months, but this allowed for them to build a relationship, until they could meet face to face. The relationship grew and the young person began trusting the IV and their conversations became more meaningful, the young person would talk about a few of their worries with the volunteer.

In November 2021, when the young person reached 18 years, we were asked by their Social worker, foster carer if the match could continue (Independent Visiting generally ends at 18) we felt it was important for the match to continue as it would benefit the young person as they transitioned into adulthood. We contacted our commissioners, and it was agreed the match could continue and we would review it in 6 months.

An Independent Visitor is very important and a valuable person in children and young people's lives the young person and their volunteer have continued to develop a good relationship where there is trust. The young person speaks with the IV about different things in their life. This relationship demonstrates how effective the service can be when everything is in place and shows a value that is far beyond money.

When a young person in care finds an adult who they can trust as they are not connected to any of the professional bodies, it is special and to be promoted as a good reason why the service is delivered.

- Nationally discussions are taking place with other Independent Visitor services about **the need for IV services to support more 18's and overs**. As one young person said *I did not need an IV at 12 but now I am 18 and living independently I could do with an independent person for support*

Further demonstrating the **consistency of IV support**, during Covid restrictions we **developed novel ways to continue engaging with children/young people**. For example, volunteers took part in virtual escape room activities, cooking activities or book clubs with their young people. The outcome was that **all our matches were maintained**, which was testament to volunteer commitment and meant that those we support **did not miss out** on this valuable service.



## Advocacy Case study

The service received a referral from a Social Worker regarding a young person in Foster Care, whose siblings had been adopted, and who was unhappy with the letterbox contact that he had with them. The Social Worker had already made enquiries to the letterbox agency and had not heard back, so felt an independent voice might be more effective.

The Advocate visited the young person to gain an understanding of their issue and find out what it was they wanted help with. The young person told them that he felt he had been promised letterbox contact with his siblings, but believed the letters were being written by the adoptive parents instead. He felt the letters he received were very impersonal, and frequently arrived late. This was extremely upsetting to him, as he put a lot of time and thought into the letters he wrote to them, often including photos, and was worried that his siblings would forget him.

The Advocate decided to submit a Stage 1 Complaint to the Local Authority, writing a letter that expressed the young person's feelings about the letterbox contact and his wish that the adoptive parents could support his siblings to write themselves so he could have more meaningful contact with them, as he felt had been agreed.

The Local Authority replied that they understood how he was feeling and that they were sorry he was unhappy. They explained that according to the letterbox agency, the adoptive parents were responsible for making these decisions until the siblings were 18, so there was no obligation that the letters come directly from his siblings. They offered, however, to share a letter with the adoptive parents to see if a voluntary agreement could be found.

The service understood that the council was balancing competing priorities – they had a responsibility to respect the rights of the adoptive parents, as well as hear the views of the child.

While waiting for a response, the Advocate helped the young person to understand the Local Authority's limitations and that his request would require an agreement from the adoptive parents and reassured him that it was important he was using his voice to try to make something happen. They also informed him that his letters would go in his siblings' records, so they would be able to see them when they were older and would see his effort to contact them.

The outcome was a verbal agreement from the adoptive parents that they would include some photos of the siblings' artworks in the letters, and at the time the case was closed the young person had received a letter from the adoptive parents written in a more personal way, including the promised photos. The letterbox agency sent some further information to the young person about how the system works.

Also resulting from this piece of advocacy work, the council made changes to the way it explains letterbox contact to young people, making it clearer that the nature of contact is dependent on adoptive parents' decisions and there is no guarantee of direct contact, to ensure young people do not have false expectations in future.

## Partnership working:

The team attend various meetings to continue to raise awareness of the service, share information as well as acting as a critical friend to the Local Authority.

The service is a regular member of The Children's Trust Board and the Corporate Parenting Board which ensures we can keep up to date with the Local Authority as is a good networking opportunity

Partnership working is paramount to what we do. **Working well with other organisations means we can provide the best quality and most streamlined & effective support for the children & young people we serve.**

For example, the service **work closely with Pure Insight** (care-leavers support) as some of the care-leavers are supported by both organisations at the same time. Ensuring the team communicate well and support each other enables the team to deliver the best care possible to young people whilst maximising the impact of their own voice.

As a service it is especially **important to have good relations with professionals** such as Social Workers, Independent Reviewing Officers, and Personal Advisors, to do our absolute best for the children and young people. Fostering good relations is especially valuable if the team need to challenge the Local Authority: since we are independent of the Authority, the team are best placed to make such challenges, which can be a positive support to the Social Worker or Independent Reviewing Officer who are politically less able to make direct challenges due to their position.

In March 2022 the service sent information on some children's training being delivered by Article 39 which is a national children's Rights organisation to the Participation Team to encourage any young people to attend the **Children's Rights Training for under 18's**. One young person from the Youth Council attended the training, which was very positive.

The Children's Society's partnership with commissioners the Local Authorities are extremely important. Whilst taking our role in representing the voice of the young person very seriously, the team recognise **the benefits of effective relationships with the Local Authority** in securing positive change for young people. The team are careful to exercise tact and diplomacy when voicing the desires of the young person to the authority: The Children's Society find that exploring collaboratively *how* we can make something happen, as opposed to bulldozing in with inflexible demands, is much more effective in achieving the desired results, the team work hard to make good relationships up with colleagues and to express to colleagues especially in terms of when we are supporting a child with a complaint that we are there to express the young person's voice and it is not us that are making the complaint so we ensure our written wording in complaint s is shown as the voice of the child or young person.

## Challenges and Developments

- From listening to children and young people and their carers whilst delivering the work, the team **have adapted how and where they meet with young people**, supporting them to feel comfortable in control of their care. For instance:
  - Meeting a young person on the farm where they tend to horses, as the child feels **more relaxed and able to share their views** with the advocate whilst brushing the horse.
  - For one child, the advocate has taken their small friendly dog on the visit as we found out the child already has animal therapy, finds having a dog present **comforting and is able to talk more** as a result.
- During Covid restrictions, the team developed enhanced ways to engage with children and young people virtually, taking advantage of video calling, emails, and messaging. Some children/young people have told their worker that they prefer virtual contact, so this has continued, and the service offer a blended approach whereby the child/young person has a **choice of face-to-face or remote contact**.
- Staff have been hearing from children/young people that they are **feeling overwhelmed with education and being in care**. Some young people have feelings of hopelessness, and emotional stability, as well as concerns for their parents' mental health. We have subsequently been working on how we can better support individuals in such cases:
  - The service shared this with the Local Authority and sought to **explore collectively** how we can tweak our practice to better manage such concerns.
  - As a team, we are making sure we have an **appropriate and comprehensive range of information to share** with the young people when they hear this, so they can support and signpost them to other services that will be best placed to help them.
  - Another benefit of developing the service's practice in this area is that, by being efficient in their ability to refer/signpost, they **free up more time** to listen to the child or young person.
- The quote below illustrates **an example of a young person progressing to self-advocacy**:

An advocate asked the young person, "Do you feel you still need advocacy?"

They replied: "No, I feel people are listening to me now, thank you so much for your support, I really appreciate it. I think my voice has been heard, I cannot thank you enough, you have been a massive help as you understood how anxious I get with everything. I think you have done your job and feel ok to end it."

## Impact and challenge

In addition to the service's impact highlighted, through listening to children and young people and working collaboratively with the Local Authority, the service has been **instrumental in bringing about changes in the system to benefit children & young people**, their rights, and experiences. For example:

The service supported a young person who was having long delays in having access to specialist equipment: the child now has the equipment he needs, and the Local Authority changed the way they process specialist equipment requests so that there are not lengthy delays for children and young people

- A young person experienced troubling experience regarding **'Letter Box Contact'** with their birth siblings who had been adopted: he had been promised Letter Box contact, but on receiving the letters, it seemed that they had been written by the adoptive parents and not his siblings. The service has subsequently **influenced changes in how this is managed by the Local Authority**, who have agreed that they need to be **more effective in the way they talk to young people about Letterbox Contact**, ensuring they explain the process properly and not set unrealistic/unachievable expectations. The service also worked with the young person and local authority to make indirect contact with the adoptive parents, resulting in a more personal style of letter and inclusion of photographs of the siblings' artwork.
- As a service, we know we are having an impact on children and young people, especially in terms of them **feeling listened to** and eventually **feeling more confident to advocate for themselves as a result of our participation work and engagement approaches**. An example of how this is measured is when young people decide to attend their cared-for meetings after being supported by their advocate, which they hadn't done previously.

At the end of the work, we do a **satisfaction survey** with children and young people, however the response rate is very low, so we are looking at other ways to capture feedback from children and young people.



## Tools used to capture the voice of the child:



Our advocates use a 'Jelly Baby Tree' and ask child or young person where they see themselves on the tree. This aims to allow the child to think about how they are feeling a child or young person can change through-out the day or week



My Wheel  
Advocates use the My Wheel tool to gain a rounded understanding of the young person's life and encourage them to think about changes they would like to see



The team uses feelings charts which is a visual representation and especially good when the team need to complete non instructed advocacy with children and young people.

- To help children and young people get to know the team and feel comfortable with their advocate or Independent Visitor Coordinator, the service provides a 'pen picture', which is essentially an 'all about me' card. It explains, in a child-friendly format, who the advocate or worker is, what they do, and some information about their likes and dislikes to help build a human connection, see example pen picture





## Future Actions/ Next Steps:

- **The service's aim is to empower children and young people to self-advocate**, using their own voice assertively to influence decisions made about their lives. The service want's children and young people to feel confident to talk to their Social Worker, carer and/or other professionals to share their views and have their say in what happens in their lives – and, if needed, to feel able to refer into our advocacy service if needed. **Ways the team will work towards achieving this** is by supporting children and young people in meetings to enable them to gain confidence in speaking at their meetings, to give them tools like writing down their questions before they meet with their social worker or Independent Reviewing Officer.
- The service aim for **all children and young people in the area to know where to seek advocacy/IV** support if they need it. When children access this service, the aim is for them to feel **listened-to and supported**, and to represent their views purely and effectively. **Ways the team will work towards achieving this** is to ensure our information is on the appropriate websites and up to date, professionals in their lives know how to sign post young people to the service.
- The service wants to **develop excellent volunteers** who are trained and supported as Independent Visitors that have **the skills and resources** to support children especially in terms of their mental health and can be alerted to any signs of exploitation. **Ways the team will work towards achieving this** is by offering all our volunteers more training on mental health, and CSE and to discuss in supervisions with the volunteers any concerns they have in terms of mental health, CSE and on-line safety.
- We aim to help develop **good Social Workers for the future**: **Ways the team will work towards achieving this** is by offering Social Work students' placements, giving them an understanding of **Children's Rights and the importance of listening to children & young people**. We will also share good practice around the use of supportive, respectful language, based on what we have heard from children & young people themselves. For example, not talking about 'placement' but 'their home', Through leading by example, we hope to influence and enhance other professionals' use of positive, supportive language

- The service will play our part in **supporting children and young people's mental health: Ways the team will work towards achieving this** is by seeking out **appropriate and comprehensive range of information** to share with children and young people regarding their mental health and using the National resources we have on offer like Human Connection cards.
- The service will continue to work in partnership with Cheshire East colleagues to ensure **good partnership working** and better communication and to develop more webinars to share with colleagues to ensure they are kept up to date and are appropriately informed to refer into the service. As well as continue to share national Children's Society resources with colleagues in the local authority and other services who work with children and young people.

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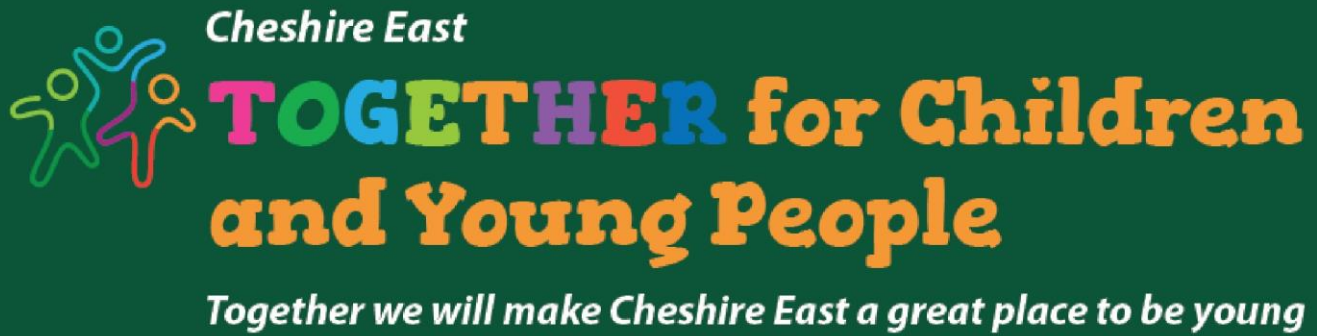
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# Virtual School for Cared for Children Head Teacher's Annual Report 2021/22



## Introduction

This report presents an overview of the operation and impact of the virtual school during 2021-22. The role of the virtual school is clearly defined in *Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children statutory guidance for local authorities 2018*. The virtual school (VS) supports all children in care regardless of their length of time in care, however the educational attainment data in the report relates to those who have been in continuous care from 31 March 2021 to 31 March 2022.

During 2021/22, the virtual school has continued to support all cared for children and to continually review its operation and new ways of working following the challenges faced by the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure it is meeting its statutory duties while providing effective support to children and young people, families, carers, schools, and settings. Every child and young person has an allocated worker within the virtual school to ensure effective oversight and support is in place. The head of service for inclusion fulfils the role of head teacher at the virtual school and also leads on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). To ensure sufficient leadership capacity, a deputy headteacher of virtual school role has been developed to support with the operational running of the virtual school alongside the head of service for inclusion.

The overall number of cared for children has been relatively consistent at just over 500 for the past 12 months. Cared for children are making good progress overall. To continue to improve outcomes, targeted support is needed to challenge some secondary and independent schools where cared for children have underperformed in previous years.

All children have access to additional pupil premium funding, to put in place interventions which are additional to the normal school support and are linked to specific targets within personal education plans (PEPs), to ensure interventions are tracked and monitored for evidence of impact and accountability.

The virtual school has a duty to work with head teachers to try and avoid excluding a cared for child and to make sure that they have the support in place to thrive and make progress. In the case of repeat exclusions, additional PEPs will be held to check that all necessary support is being given. There have not been any cases of a permanent exclusion in 2021/22.

The virtual school works closely with other services within the local authority: social care, SEN, school admissions, medical needs, attendance, and youth support. As a result of the partnership working, processes and procedures have been revised to become more efficient. The virtual school have delivered cross service training on how all services can support improving the educational outcomes of cared for children.





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## Self-Evaluation

Area	Self-Evaluation			Priorities for 22-23
Foundation stage				Track and Monitor attainment and progress throughout academic year to support to identify any gaps. Undertake deep dive into attainment data for individual children and young people where there are gaps in attainment and progress to ensure that PEPS reflect the support needed and intervention is in place and measured for impact.
Key stage 1				
Key stage 2				
Key stage 4				
Post-16				
SEN				Graded as amber as systems are in place across Virtual School and SEND, focus is to align PEPS and annual reviews consistently. Ensure timely support
Admissions				Admissions process supports all cared for children, we have not had to direct any school to admit a cared for child; we work effectively with the admissions team to ensure phased transitions are tracked and support in place
Attendance				The overall attendance is 88.8% for the full academic year, we need to ensure there is a clear focus on further improving attendance of all children those who are most vulnerable ensuring timely support in place when attendance dips below 90%. Working closely with social care to ensure where placements changes occur, there is no drift and delay.
Exclusions				We have had no recorded permanent exclusions for the last 3 years
Leadership and Management				Leadership and management are effective with introduction of deputy virtual school headteacher this year, to support operational oversight alongside virtual headteacher
Staff Training				To strengthen virtual training sessions further for wider staff and partners following the pandemic.
Finance				Finance systems are robust and effective to ensure that funding is tracked and monitored
PEPs				To strengthen the moderation process, leaders will focus next year on the introduction of leadership PEP sampling to review the quality of PEPs termly and provide effective feedback to ensure improvement in overall quality of PEPs throughout the academic year.





Partnership Working				We have systems in place to ensure cross service working is effective and good relationships with our schools and wider partners with good communication; ensuring positive outcomes.
Participation by children and young people				Children/young people have continued to participate within PEP meetings and through reviews to ensure their voice is captured
Safeguarding and promotion of wellbeing				Ensure all staff have had clear training in relation to our most vulnerable children and young people

**Key:** **Green** = area doing well, **Amber** = further work needed, **Red** = high priority for action.



## Making a difference to education outcomes for every child

Below outlines the key focus areas for the virtual school regarding promoting the educational achievement of cared for children, wherever they live or are educated



## Remit and operation of the virtual school in Cheshire East Council

Local authorities have a duty under the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child looked after by them. This includes a particular duty to promote the child's educational achievement, wherever they live or are educated. The authority must therefore give particular attention to the educational implications of any decision about the welfare of those children. The local authority is required to appoint a virtual school head teacher (VSH) for the purpose of discharging this duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children, wherever they live or are educated. Our head of service for inclusion holds the role of the virtual school head teacher.

The virtual school operates using a locality model. This has helped significantly in the development of relationships with schools and other professionals resulting in better working practices.

The maxim of the Cheshire East virtual school is to 'Engage, Achieve and Progress'. The virtual school operates in such a way as to follow the statutory guidance to local authorities in the documents 'Promoting the education of looked after children and previously looked after children' (DfE, February 2018), 'virtual school head role extension to children with a social worker' (DFE June 2021) This requires the local authority to ensure that there are systems in place which promote good education provision for cared for children and to monitor that these are in place. In Cheshire East every young person in care has a named virtual school advisor who can provide support and challenge to schools, carers, and social workers. This in turn helps to ensure that there is suitable education in place, the needs of the child can be championed, and education providers can be challenged and supported to ensure that they make suitable arrangements to allow the child to reach their full potential. This is carried out through termly PEP meetings with additional meetings and activities put into place for those with the highest level of need. The service is provided to all children in care up to the end of the school year in which they become 18; we have a dedicated post 16 advisor who works closely with our care leavers team to ensure the smooth transition and preparation for adulthood.

During Ofsted's focused inspection of children's services in October 2019 inspectors stated: "Children are well-supported with their education through the virtual school team."

The findings of the joint targeted area inspection of the multi-agency response to the criminal exploitation of children in July 2022 found that the role of education, as a protective factor, is not high profile enough in multi-agency work. Too often, children at risk of exploitation do not attend school or are engaged in minimal tuition. Partners do not challenge each other or have sufficiently robust plans to address low engagement in education. In addition, the impact of placement moves on children's education is not sufficiently considered by multi-agency partners. Too often, placement moves result in a breakdown in education which exacerbates the risk of children being exploited.



## Partnership working

Partnership working is crucial to the effectiveness of the virtual school, and we recognise our role in being part of a team with the child at the heart. We recognise that to be effective we need to have close working relationships with our partners.

Teams within the council that the virtual school works with are:

- Social care – social workers, care leavers, fostering and cared for support therapeutic teams, attending all resource and accommodation panel meetings weekly to support sharing information on education when placements moves are being considered/sourced. Attending stability meetings with social workers and carers.
- Independent reviewing officers
- Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) team
- Youth justice service (YJS), with an YJS advisor who works part-time within the virtual school team.
- Youth Support Service – monthly meetings to support interventions to reduce young people who are not in education, employment, or training.
- Early years team, with an advisor who works part-time within the virtual school team.
- Corporate Parenting, with the virtual school head teacher attending all corporate parenting committee meetings.

The virtual school also works with the independent reviewing officers and foster carers, providing training and support as needed. Through membership of education, head teacher and virtual school head regional groups, the virtual school can keep abreast of all current events and news items both regionally and nationally to ensure best practice is shared and partners are aware of matters which influence their area to promote the educational outcomes of cared for and previously cared for children.

Our key priorities are outlined in the cared for children and care leavers Strategy; **Pledge Two: We will improve education, employment, and training outcomes are:**

We will have high aspirations for every child and young person and will help them to achieve their ambitions, including using opportunities in the 'family businesses and our contacts so that they can be happy and successful in their education, training, and employment.

Every child and young person will have an education plan that is targeted, our ambition is to ensure they have the support in place to reach their full potential.

We will strive to that ensure that every child and young person will have access to consistent, high-quality, well-matched opportunities in education, training, and employment.





## Training and Support

The virtual school provide training on education issues relating to children in care. Head teachers and governing bodies are required to appoint a designated teacher, to champion the needs and support of cared for children and to ensure that this teacher has access to training. Wider school training has proved harder this year due to the pandemic but has continued to be offered to all schools/settings. In Cheshire East this is provided in a variety of ways:

- Update/network meetings open to all schools and led by the virtual school
- New designated teacher training
- Annual cross service designated lead training
- Bespoke training in individual schools which can be around a particular child or for all staff including attachment and trauma whole staff training
- Arranging outside speakers to provide 'expert' input.
- Training for social care and new social workers on improving educational outcomes of cared for children, statutory responsibilities, and PEPs.

### The universal training programme offered by the virtual school for designated leads in schools

Date	Title	Objectives
February 2022	Designated teacher locality sessions held in Macclesfield & Middlewich	<p>Locality sessions were held for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions and meeting the team</li> <li>• Care leaver &amp; Venture with confidence information session lead by Katie Foster from the Virtual School and Duncan Allen the Apprenticeship coordinator alongside one of our care leavers.</li> <li>• Attachment and ACE's training lead by the Education Psychologists' team</li> <li>• PEPs - Improving the quality of PEPs from a school perspective, ran by two of our designated teachers to share good practice.</li> <li>• Encyclopaedia Britannica demonstration</li> <li>• Mockingbird fostering session</li> <li>• Pupil Premium and additional grant funding and extended duties update</li> <li>• Wellbeing session led by Lisa Carden Doorey</li> </ul>



The network events held in February 2022 were attended by 49 school representatives. This provided information and workshop sessions from a range of services. Feedback was positive with delegates stating that the sessions were useful and would help them to better support children in school.

Some of the best training I have attended by the Virtual School

As part of the training, we had a PEP session delivered by two designated teachers. This proved invaluable for giving other schools support and ideas about how to complete a PEP ensuring SMART targets and content are detailed and can measure progress and impact. Following the training and feedback we have noticed a significant improvement in identified school PEP returns.

**Impact of training:**

Session delivered on improving quality of PEPs data shows:

- Autumn term 1 (September 21 – December 21 prior to training sessions)
- 131 PEPs were quality assured and graded good
- Spring term (post training)
- 150 PEPs were quality assured and graded good
- 7 PEPs in autumn term (pre training) were graded as poor by Spring term 4 had moved to satisfactory and by Summer then graded as good.
- Access to training from educational psychology service – emotional literacy support assistant

**Training scheduled for October 2022 - December 2022**

- New designated lead training/network sessions
- Annual designated teacher training network day Pupil premium workshop
- Foster carers training session

During these sessions we will be gaining feedback from schools to identify wider training needs and themes for this academic year and will work with partners to set up and deliver cross service training and workshops.

It was great to hear from a fellow designated teacher about PEPs



## Universal training offer for children with a social worker

The Department of Education have recently announced an extension of the virtual school head teacher duties to include all children and young people with a social worker from September 2021- March 2022. This extension is supported by some grant funding. The guidance outlines this as a strategic role rather than direct working with our key responsibilities to offer support/advice and guidance indirectly. To be able to support as many schools as possible, we are using the funding to put together a universal training offer. This training will be paid in full and is available to all schools/settings with children with a social worker.

Please find below a list of training available:

- Attendance and children out of school
- Safeguarding children in an education setting - basic awareness training
- Safeguarding children in an education setting - level 2 refresher for designated safeguarding leads
- Safeguarding children in an education setting - level 2 designated safeguarding lead training
- Safeguarding children in an education setting - preparing evidence for inspections, audit, and scrutiny
- Emotional literacy support assistant training
- Emotional literacy support assistant supervision
- Emotion coaching
- Attachment and trauma

Training Type	Number of Staff	Number of Settings
Attendance – to support schools to understand the impact of attendance on attainment and access support through the attendance and out of school team	17	16
Emotional literacy support assistant (figures are recorded for schools who have accessed training with a social work and those with cared for children)	53	
Attachment and trauma – Understand adverse childhood experiences, creating an attachment aware environment	8	8
Emotion coaching – Understanding emotions and how to listen empathetically, validating feelings and supporting to identify strategies	4	4

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We also worked with several schools to undertake some targeted work for those settings with a higher number of children with a social worker this included projects such as:

- Family ties - emotional literacy intervention
- My happy minds
- Better readers intervention sessions
- A wrap around wellbeing programme with school having access to an identified social worker

These duties have been extended for a further 12 months to allow for the support to be extended; over the next 12 months we will be monitoring these programmes of support and reporting on the impact this has made in relation to the overall remit of work undertaken

The support we have had from your team has been amazing! The team are wonderful human beings and have made such a difference to my work. I spoke to my CEO of our MAT this week to say what a difference it has made.

Please pass on my positive feedback because having another professional involved for me, as senco/DSL/CFC teacher/teacher etc has been so supportive - both team members are just brilliant and worth their weight in gold. (Feedback from a teacher sent to the attendance and children out of school team)

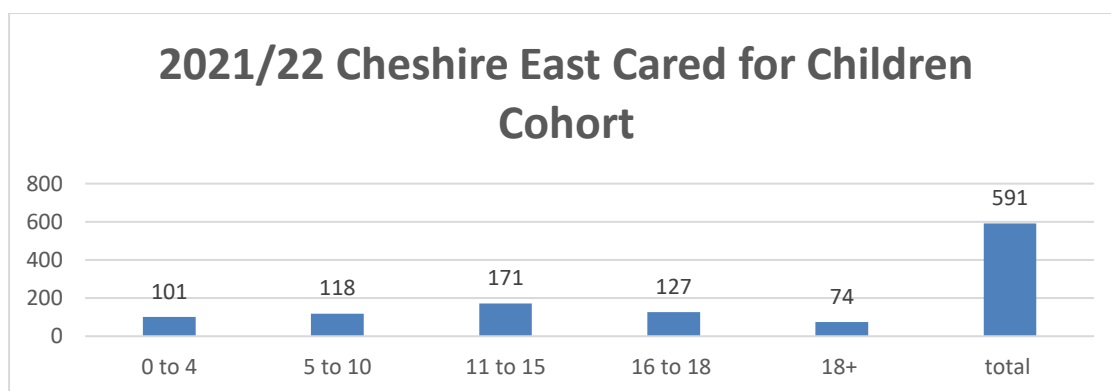
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## School Roll

At the end of the 2021/22 academic year there were 591 cared for children being supported by the virtual school, this was a slight increase from 587 the previous year. Of these, 333 were of school age. Cheshire East cared for children from reception to year 11, attended 192 different schools in 34 different local authorities. 56.5% of our children attended Cheshire East schools. Those children and young people that are attending schools out of authority is mainly due to placements being out of borough. Of these, we have 188 children and young people placed within Cheshire East and 145 children and young people placed out of borough, with 62 children placed within neighbouring authorities such as Cheshire West, Manchester, Stockport, Warrington, Staffordshire, and Stoke on Trent. The chart below shows a break-down of age/school groups.



\*Some school age will fall in the 0-4 categories due to their birthdays.

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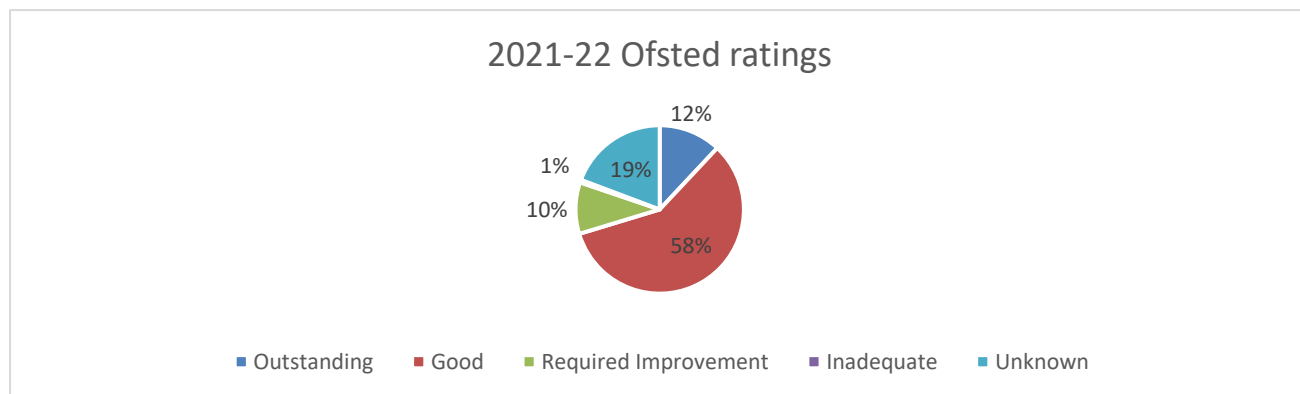
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## Ofsted Ratings

The statutory guidance states that schools judged by Ofsted to be 'good' or 'outstanding' should be prioritised for cared for children. If any Cheshire East child is placed in a school rated below 'good' then virtual school advisors will visit every school prior to any child being placed to ensure that pastoral and curriculum support is of a good standard. Advisors will attend PEPs and track progress each term throughout the year of all children in schools graded below 'good' to ensure that children are well supported and are making progress. PEPs are completed immediately when schools' grades are moved below 'good' following Ofsted inspection to ensure that the needs of the child are being met. The chart below shows the proportion of pupils attending schools with identified Ofsted ratings.

\* 19% (37 schools) Unknown due to conversion to academy or new schools so they have not had their first inspection report.



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## Special Educational Needs

**At the end of academic year 2021/22 there were:**

- 127 children and young people with an education, health, and care plan across all years (0-18)
- 90 school age children with an education, health, and care plan
- 1 early years child with an education, health, and care plan
- 36 post 16 young people with an education, health, and care plan
- A further 44 children and young people identified as having SEND needs: of these 10 children are at the needs assessment stage and 34 children and young people with either a school support plan or school focus plan.

The virtual school has an identified SEN lead advisor who meets with the cared for keyworker lead from the SEND team weekly. This is to review cases to ensure effective timeliness and interventions are in place, plans are finalised, and advice received. The primary focus for next year is to continue to improve timeliness within the needs assessment process ensuring annual reviews are aligned with PEPs, and to ensure that moves between schools are timely and well planned. This is particularly important if school moves are out of authority. We have robust tracking and monitoring procedures in place.

The virtual school has continued to embed cross-service working within the SEND team to ensure that children are in the correct school to meet their needs and making progress. Advisors are involved if an application for a needs assessment is made and are contacted by the SEND team to request any advice to be included in the assessment process. If a child has an education, health, and care plan (EHCP), we are working to ensure schools/settings are aligning the EHCP review alongside the PEP in order that the targets can be aligned to complement and reflect each other and support the holistic outcomes for children and young people. In cases where school moves are required for children with an EHCP there is support in place to ensure that all children have access to interim education whilst the consultation process takes place.



## Staffing and Organisation

The make-up and nature of the virtual school team is kept under review to ensure that the skills available, match the needs of the cohort. During this academic year we have moved to working in localities to facilitate improving support to schools and develop working groups within locality areas to develop training and share best practice.

We have now appointed a permanent deputy head teacher to monitor and support the team on a day-to-day basis and to inspire and lead to facilitate the best outcomes for all.

The team has evolved to provide more direct contact and support for children and young people so that the interventions can be more closely tailored to meet needs and monitored for individual impact.

### Virtual School Team

- Head of service for inclusion (SEND and virtual school head teacher)
- Deputy head teacher
- Education advisor (north, central, south)
- Education advisor (YJS)
- Learning mentors (north, central, south)
- Post 16 education advisor
- Post 16 learning mentor
- Post 16 tutor
- Two specialist attendance officers (to cover across all areas, including children out of borough)
- Data and administration manager
- Team administrator
- PEP administrator

The virtual school head teacher is working alongside the head of service for education and pupil participation and principal educational psychologist to further develop the support, advice and guidance to schools and settings.

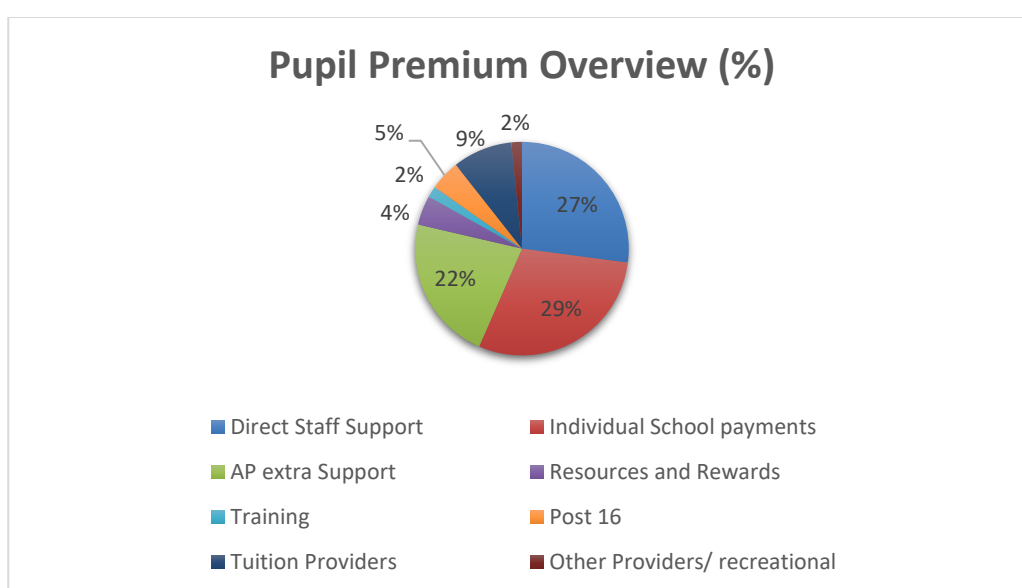
The virtual school head teacher and deputy head teacher are members of the northwest virtual school head group and of the national association of virtual School heads (NAVSH) and through this network the virtual school can keep abreast of current developments and to be updated on government guidance, attend workshops and training days, and share good practice.





## Pupil Premium Funding 2021-22

The virtual school's main budget is the pupil premium plus, which is devolved to the local authority and is to be used as seen appropriate by the VSH as to best promote achievement and progress of cared for children. The amount which is made available to the LA is £2345 per child in care as reported on the March return but the guidance makes clear that while it is expected that the majority of this is used for direct support of children, it does not need to be allocated equally as some children will need less than £2345 and some will need considerably more. The funding criteria also states that the pupil premium can be used to fund staff or central services such as training if they have a direct impact on improving the experience and outcomes for children.



The main use of pupil premium was to fund intervention work and provisions delivered directly through school and identified through individual PEPs. The remaining funds have been used to provide support for children which is above and over what is offered as part of the usual school curriculum/ offer. These may include attending alternative provision sessions, as part of bespoke timetable packages for children who require additional support within mainstream school. These provisions offer a series of off-site support such as animal therapy or forest schools, having a weekly work placement to add variety, help with preparing for adulthood or funding specialist support such as counselling. Funds were also allocated to schools to support with remote learning, access targeted support or to prepare for transition. The aim of this was to ensure that children were supported regarding increasing their skills and knowledge before the exams/assessments and to support improving their preparation and confidence.

School age children in care are allocated pupil premium when a PEP is returned with a funding request form which outlines how this would be spent and the intended outcomes and, in some cases, funding was allocated to children outside this age range if the need was evident. For example,



a post-16 young person not in education who wished to take up a work placement to gain skills and confidence. Some school age children did not have a basic allocation if the school felt it had all the resources needed, such as an independent special school which already receives a high level of funding or if the virtual school was arranging and funding provision, such as tuition or access to wider learning opportunities. In most cases funding is transferred to the school, but in some cases, funding is used centrally, for example purchase of resources, equipment, and book parcels for young children to encourage love of reading and improving literacy.

### Case study of a young person that has received pupil premium funding

#### **Background:**

Child X attended high school and gained 6s and 7s in GCSEs

-Child X is now in sixth form.

-The November data collection still showed that child X's predicted grades to be lower than needed to complete preferred A-Levels at sixth form.

-

#### **Type of intervention:**

-1-1 tuition in Maths and Science.

-Study packs were issued to help focus revision and review and these included some exam practice.

-Study periods to read through the chapters in the textbook and answer the end of page questions.

-Teachers available to support with any questions that they struggled with and couldn't complete on their own.

-Child X has also been given videos that walkthrough the assessments that have been done so far and was advised to make sure they used these to plug the gaps in knowledge.

#### **Impact of interventions:**

	Predicted grade at the start of the year	Assignment and assessment grades in spring term	Assignment and assessment grades in summer term following targeted intervention
Biology	D	E& U	D & C
Maths	B	C	B

Child X found the extra tuition beneficial and is pleased with the impact it has had on the grades which will support their aspiration to attend university.





Below is an outline of some of the most used interventions funded through pupil premium to support our children and young people.

### Emotional literacy support assistant



ELSA (emotional literacy support assistant) is designed to build the capacity of schools, to support the emotional needs of their pupils from within their own resources. This is achieved by training teaching assistants to develop and deliver individualised support programmes to meet the emotional needs of children and teenagers in their care. It recognises that children learn better and are happier in school if their emotional needs are also addressed. Within Cheshire east we have worked alongside our educational psychologists to fund delivery of ELSA for our three new learning mentors and additional places were allocated for designated teachers from Cheshire East schools to attend and to help support with their cared for children. This support will ensure that provision is in place for one to one or small groups with social, emotional, and mental health needs alongside school staff.

### Letterbox Book Trust



The virtual school are supporting our children to have access to books and reading through funding Letterbox parcels; each child receives their own colourful parcel of books, maths games, stationery, and other high-quality materials once every month for six months. This year we have had a specific focus on signing up all our children moving into reception, year 1 and year 5 to receive the letterbox book trust parcels to support them with their transition into their assessment years.

### Recreational Activities

The virtual school have also supported children to access recreational activities where they would not normally be open for them to access; we have supported with additional funding for swimming lessons, horse riding lessons, music lessons, performing arts and forest school. One of our young people has achieved grade 2 in piano and is now working towards grade 3.



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## Britannica



Britannica Digital Learning has been working in partnership with virtual schools across the UK since 2014 to help support the challenges that children and young people face when online. We know it is important for parents/ carers to feel assured that children are using a safe, reliable website and one that they can explore independently and unsupervised. For 250 years, Encyclopaedia Britannica's editorial team have collaborated with experts, scholars, and specialists to produce trusted content. Through working closely with authorities, carers, parents, and educators, we have been able to adapt this for the new generation of digital learners. Cheshire East virtual school have funded this to ensure that all children, parents, and carers have access to Britannica online digital learning platform.

Since Britannica presented at our training sessions in February there has been a significant increase in people accessing the site for access to resources and materials.

Quote from Britannica following designated training in February 'you'll be as pleased as I am to see what an impact our February training sessions have had! I am thrilled to see the resource is being used so well across your community'

Date/Time	Searches	Documents	Multimedia	Sessions	Hits
Feb 2022	859	161	7	70	20312
March 22	173	74	14	29	8585
April 22	31	42	40	30	3991
May 22	360	173	5	100	11619

## Work Based Learning Programmes

Within the virtual school we have supported to fund children and young people to have access to structured work-based learning programmes which supports children and young people with the transition from school to workplace. We ensure that all programmes are a structured employability pathway designed to ensure children are equipped with the tools they need to go into the world and become an independent employee, fully preparing them for adulthood. Alongside this the virtual school also has an additional budget to fund a targeted programme for post 16 to support increasing engagement into education, employment, and training.



## Learning Mentors

The virtual school has three dedicated learning mentors who work with all school aged children and are allocated to a locality. The main aim is to work with school aged children to support social, emotional mental health and transition. Most referrals are made when children have had a placement or school change or where children have high levels of anxiety. The learning mentors work alongside designated teachers and other agencies to support cared for children to overcome barriers to learning.

"This is an amazing outcome. He mentioned that he really enjoys his sessions with yourself and feels comfortable to chat."  
(Quote from a school about mentor support for a child)



Our learning mentors are all ELSA (emotional literacy support Assistant) trained and follow different programmes of study depending on the needs of the child and consult with different professionals and parent/ carers and social care prior to planning the sessions. This multi-faceted approach aims to upskill the schools by enabling them to provide a consistent approach which can be maintained once the direct work with the learning mentor (LM) ceases. The focus of with the young people has included:



- Joint work for year 6 to 7 transition
- Support in reintegrating back into mainstream provision
- 1:1 support around anxiety
- How to manage challenging social interactions and friendships
- Support around emotional regulation and the exploration of feelings
- Understanding feelings, social and friendship skills.
- Support visits to schools and alternative provisions
- Prepare young people for their post 16 option
- Develop revision plans and exam techniques
- Promote positive self-image and esteem
- Support children with understanding online safety
- Promote trusting relationships with adults



### Case Study from the Learning Mentors Support

Child B in a mainstream school. 94.8% attendance. Age expected. No SEN

#### **Areas of concern:**

- Missed learning due to school change
- Emotional wellbeing
- Management of emotions in the classroom
- Truanting and leaving lessons

#### **Learning Mentor support:**

- 1:1 ELSA sessions focussed on discussing emotions and developing coping techniques
- Supported a visit to alternative provision as part of school timetable
- Promote positive relationships and safety online

#### **Outcome of support:**

- B has developed a trusting relationship with the mentor and attends every session
- B attends an alternative provision programme one day a week, alongside school curriculum. This has been successful as B has developed skills linked to child b's interest.
- B has had the confidence to become involved in wider school activities and apply for leadership positions in school, as supported by the mentor



## Virtual school post 16 tutor

1:1 tuition is offered to 16–18-year-olds. Most of the young people taking part are currently not in education, employment, and training and/or have no formal qualifications. If there is a need and there is a capacity within the caseload, 1:1 tuition is also offered to young people under-16 and over-18 years old to support clear transition planning. The purpose of 1:1 tuition is to gain qualifications, improve confidence, to engage in other positive activities and progress to education, employment, and training.

### 1:1 Tuition offer – functional skills maths and English

Every student has access to an online learning resource. Students take an initial assessment test to determine current level. An individual learning plan is created for the students to follow, using learning resources provided. As a result of the learning plans provided targeted support could then be provided based on individual needs this meant that during the last academic year, 99% of the students who were entered have passed their functional skills exams and gained qualifications.

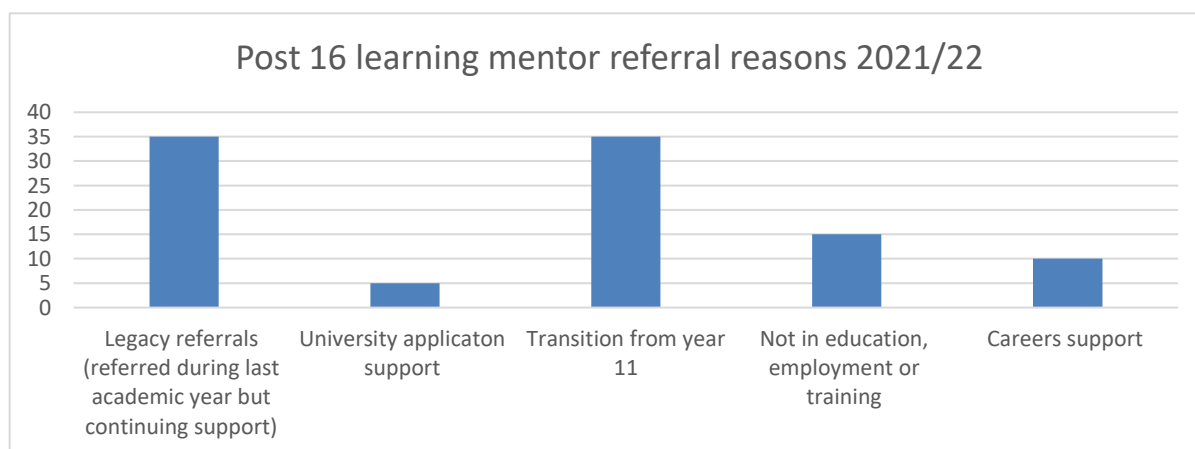
### English speakers of other languages (ESOL)

Teaching ESOL to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people (UASC) who have just come into care and are waiting to enrol to an ESOL course. Students work at their individual pace and create a portfolio of activities covered in 16 topics of ESOL activities. The main aim is to introduce English to non-speakers (Pre-Entry Level) and to boost their language skills at entry level 1 and 2. The post 16 tutor offers 1:1 intervention for several ESOL learners. All of them will either continue their ESOL education at the college courses or are enrolled for September 2022.

Over the year, UASC students have been supported with tuition prior to gaining a place at college and in some cases, the tuition has continued to reinforce college learning.

## Post 16 learning mentor

We have our post 16 learning mentor who offers specific support to our young people to support in re-engaging them back into education, employment, and training. Below is a chart showing the reasons for the referrals she has had this year:



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Post 16 learning mentor case study

Case Study:

- Child A was in year 12, in their first year at college
- Had received transition support to enrol at college, apply for bursary etc.

Key concerns:

- Poor attendance as they were not enjoying their course
- Limited engagement with support
- Poor sleeping routine
- No clear career pathway

Type of intervention:

- Support from post 16 learning mentor to link in with the college support staff – organised and supported meetings with their wellbeing worker
- Support from post 16 learning mentor to look at other education options
- Child A was referred to targeted programme to access support through the virtual school

Impact of intervention:

From the work that has been undertaken, child A and the post 16 learning mentor have built a positive relationship, and child A now has built confidence to be able to communicate effectively with wider peers and adults... It gave them the opportunity to try new things, and time to think about their next steps. They really enjoyed the adventure activities and having the opportunity to speak to the outdoor education team helped with deciding their next steps. With the support of the post 16 learning mentor, child A has applied for college, and will be successfully starting in September 2022



## Venture with confidence programme

This year we worked closely with our care leavers service to run a joint programme for children who are not in education, employment, or training with the newly improved name of Venture with Confidence which was decided by the young people themselves to avoid any negative connotations of the word NEET. The 12-week programme aims to help them into employment, further education, or training. The objective of the programme is to support our young people to:

- recognise their skills
- develop further skills
- build their confidence
- explore ideas of what they might like to do in the future; and
- arrange work experience



The young people also had the opportunity to achieve an ASDAN (Award scheme development and accreditation network) certificate in citizenship, first aid certificate and work towards their Duke of Edinburgh awards. The 'venture with confidence' scheme is run by members of virtual school team and care leaver service. The teams worked together with other services including our own youth support service, pure insight, safe opportunities, Healthwatch and journey first.

During the 12-week course the young people took part in team building activities such as canoeing and climbing, they visited Delamere Forest, the Roaches, and Llandudno. They also enjoyed employability workshops and completed community projects. This year the young people made planters at the charity Motherwell and a sun sail shade area at the Pure Insight allotment. All the materials for these projects were kindly donated by local supplier.





## Early Years

Early years cared for children have been supported by three members of the early years team during the year 2021/22. We carry out early years PEPs from age 2 to 4 years old. An early year's consultant oversees the early years support for cared for children including training for designated practitioners and PEPs, supported by two targeted support officers (TSO's) for 2-year-olds. They have supported foster carers and parents to find nursery places and where possible have visited our 2-year-old cared for children in their settings. They have ensured our 2-year-old cared for children receive their statutory progress check at age two. Foster carers and parents were signposted at PEPs to the facilities and activities being run by the Children Centres and through the Parenting Journey Facebook pages.



Pupil premium plus funding was provided to purchase back packs and school equipment in preparation for our children starting school in September 2022.

'She got a little giraffe – she loves it! She took it into school on her first day.'

(Response received about the backpacks from a foster carer)

Pupil premium has been allocated to provide all our 3- and 4-year-old children with book trust letterbox parcels. The parcels contain books, games and/or resources. The children receive six parcels and a free, festive parcel at Christmas. The parcels help support literacy skills in a fun way, helping our children to explore and enjoy access to literacy and reading.

We have continued our roll out of electronic PEPs for our 2, 3 and 4-year-old early years children which helps to ensure we are able to fully support children of all ages to monitor and track attainment and progress. Training for settings was jointly delivered by the virtual school and a member of the business intelligence team.

'Everything has been very good. Excellent. Can't complain about anything.'

(Quote about support from our early years VS worker from a family carer)

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## Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

The PEP is the document which records the children's education provision, achievements and how the school or other provider will help to improve their outcomes. It is the joint responsibility of the local authority and school to ensure that there are PEPs in place and the virtual school has the duty to monitor these and provide advice and support as necessary. The PEP should be reviewed each term at a meeting between school, carers, young people, and social workers. The virtual school attends all initial PEPs for children and young people between the ages of two and eighteen years old.

While the PEP document is mainly to support children of school age, Cheshire East also provides a similar service to children of pre-school age and those between 16-18 who are included in the raising of the participation age cohort (school years 12 and 13), although advice and support is available on request to children under 2 years and young people in care or care leavers over 18.

We have continued to develop the PEP following feedback from schools to further enhance the quality and content, with almost all primary and secondary schools now effectively using the PEP portal system. This year we have focussed on getting the post 16 and early years settings onto the portal system and we will continue to do so across all ages to ensure we are using our systems in the most efficient way.

Within Cheshire East, the virtual school takes an active role in the PEP process, ensuring prompt and proportionate action can be taken when issues arise that require specialist education input.

Virtual school advisors attend all initial PEP meetings and complete the first PEP which will provide a template and standard for future support. This includes ensuring actions and targets are specific and measurable. These PEP meetings take place within 20 working days and are available for the first cared for review meeting. PEPs are subsequently reviewed each term with the education provider taking a lead alongside social care by reviewing the child's progress, the impact of the previous actions and updating the PEP targets where appropriate.

There is a quality assurance process in place within the virtual school team where each PEP is reviewed and categorised based on the level of support needs of the child. Those with the highest support needs are rated as red, in which case the advisor will attend all PEPs and will provide more frequent contact with the child, carer, school and social worker. Cases rated as amber may require less oversight from the advisor whilst those rated as green are monitored with attendance at one PEP per year. The virtual school criteria involvement in the PEP is:

- New into care
- School or placement move
- Moved out of Borough
- Red rated cases
- Repeat exclusions
- Attendance below 90%
- Need for independent chair.

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This year there has been a drive to ensure that all PEPs are completed and loaded onto the child's case file with a particular focus on those of school age where it is important to monitor progress. PEPs are deemed unsatisfactory if key information is not provided or if a previous PEP has been amended and it is unclear if information refers to the current or previous PEP. Most PEPs rated as satisfactory are giving this grade because interventions are not specific or because the intended outcomes are not expressed in ways which can be evaluated. Where this is the case advisors support individual schools (designated leads) to develop the PEP to ensure that the quality is improved, and targets are SMART. Exemplar PEPs are shared across localities during training sessions to share good practice.

Autumn term 1 (September 21 – December 21 prior to training sessions delivered to specifically focus on 'what makes a good PEP')

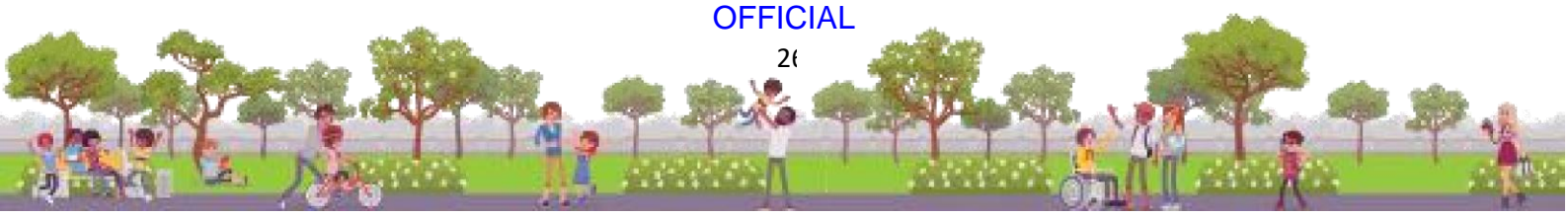
131 PEPs were quality assured and graded good

Spring term (post training)

150 PEPs were quality assured and graded good

7 PEPs in autumn term (pre training) were graded as poor by spring term 4 had moved to satisfactory and by summer then graded as good.

The quality of the PEP is the joint responsibility of the local authority and the school. Social workers, carers, VS, designated teachers and, as appropriate, other relevant professionals, work closely together. Social workers prioritise attendance at PEP meetings so that they gain essential information about the child. The virtual school head teacher has attended and led workshop sessions during social workers' team meeting to give clear guidance on PEP process and procedures. As well as updates on their attainment and progress this should include discussion of their attitude, emotional state, friendships etc. During next academic year we will be having specific focus on improving alignment of the EHCP annual review and PEP meetings, now that we have a dedicated SEND keyworker and strengthened the links with the virtual school we will be developing systems to be able to effectively track and monitor data regarding annual reviews and PEPs to be able to measure and report on impact.



OUTCOMES AND EVENTS	PEP RATING	Virtual School Support ACTION
Attendance below 80%	RED	Attend next PEP
Episode of FTE since last PEP		Consider calling emergency PEP
Planned or possible placement move		Contact Headteacher re concerns
Progress below expected for all subjects		Raise concerns with Social Worker
School move planned		Offer observation and planning
School rated as inadequate/special measures		
Attainment below age expected	AMBER	
Attendance between 80% and 90%		Call school to discuss case
Attendance between 90% and 95%		Request specific additional information
Attendance has fallen since last PEP		Call school before next PEP to assess progress
Attends school outside Cheshire East		Contact DT to offer staff training
Attends Special School (maintained or independent)		Arrange to visit school to meet DT
DT is new to post		Set up monitoring plan for interventions
Episode of FTE in past		
Has recently moved school		
In Y11 or Y6		
Lives in residential provision		
Previous PEP targets not achieved		
Progress below expected rate for 1 subjects		
School rated as RI		
Attainment equal to age expected	GREEN	
Attainment above age expected		
Attendance above 95%		Aim to attend 1 PEP per year
Attends school inside Cheshire East		Do not attend next PEP
DT is experienced		Offer advice and support if needed
In year other than 6 or 11		
Placement secure		
Previous PEP targets have been met		

There is a quality assurance (QA) process which has been developed jointly by the virtual school and the designated teachers, this has ensured that the quality of PEPs have increased and continues to support schools to develop their own practise, this is reviewed each year to ensure the process is robust.

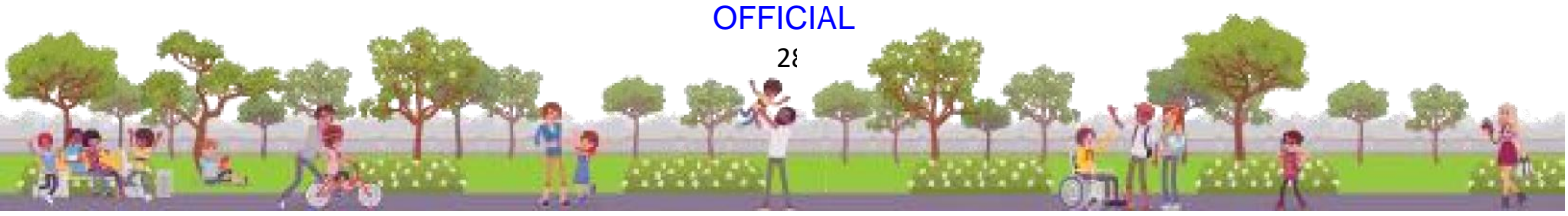
We will have a specific focus this year on further strengthening this process with the virtual school headteacher/deputy headteacher undertaking moderation and supporting to feedback to schools/settings and social care to ensure we are sharing good practise and further improve the quality and completion rates of PEPs; this will be monitored and tracked to evidence impact throughout this year.

Number of PEPs in 21/22 school year	Aged 2-4 Number in cohort= 44	Aged 5-11 Number in cohort = 142	Aged 12-16 Number in cohort = 222	Aged 16+ Number in cohort = 126	All children aged 2+ Number in cohort = 534
5	0	0	1	0	1
4	0	2	7	13	22
3	22	77	79	72	249
2	9	33	30	23	95
1	3	21	21	21	66
% at least 2 PEPs	70.45%	78.9%	52.7%	80% 85.7%	68.7%



80% of children aged 0-18 that were in care for 12 months at the end of 21/22 received at least one PEP (those recorded as not having a PEP equates to 28 young people who have had PEP meeting, but paperwork has not been returned, therefore unable to record as completed (19 are under 2 years old).

Following the successful implementation of our integrated PEPs within Liquid Logic, we currently have 276 primary and secondary schools effectively using this system. We have further improved the content of the PEP following working with our schools and have developed a signs of safety approach with more emphasis on SMART targets ensuring pupil premium is reviewed in detail for impact. We have now continued with the development of our integrated PEP system to enable it to be used for post 16 and we have now 41 colleges using the system effectively. We are also continuing with the development to include early years to ensure consistency across all age ranges and currently have 20 nurseries using the PEP portal effectively. This year we will be further developing the PEP system to ensure that preparing for adulthood is included to support careers and aspirations for all children/young people.





## School Admissions

The virtual school are responsible for ensuring that every child has access to suitable education. Where possible and appropriate, school moves will be avoided as it has been recognised that school can be a consistent and stabilising feature of a child's life. If a move is essential, then the following principles apply:

- Educational provision should mean a full-time place.
- Schools judged by Ofsted to be 'good' or 'outstanding' are prioritised for cared or children in need of a new school.
- The choice of education setting is based on what any good parent would want for their child. It is based on evidence that the setting can meet the educational needs of the child and help them make the maximum progress.
- The child's wishes and feelings are considered, and the suitability of the education setting tested by arranging an informal visit with the child.

Children move schools for several reasons which include:

- Change of foster placement which means that continuing at current school is unrealistic.
- Carers move house which means that continuing at current school is unrealistic.
- Change to live with adopters.
- Change of school if proximity to social contacts/family are having a strong negative impact on the child's progress and learning.
- Change when school can longer meet needs.

Virtual school attend weekly social care placement meetings to ensure we are effectively communicating and planning for subsequent placement moves at the earliest opportunity, ensuring where possible there is no drift and delay.

Cared for children are given the highest priority under school admission arrangements and the usual fair access protocols do not apply. The virtual school works with head teachers to make sure that any admission is made as swiftly as possible. Where schools are reluctant to offer a place, the virtual school will consider making appeals or directing schools to admit. In 2021-22 there were no appeals made and no directions needed. The virtual school work with all schools who are admitting a child to offer support, with funding if needed, to ensure a smooth transition. Where children are placed in schools rated below 'good' a clear process is in place to review the provision, advisors attend all PEP meetings throughout the academic year to ensure progress, attainment and support is reviewed termly.



## Attendance

The virtual school monitors attendance of all cared for children by commissioning an independent company to contact schools to collect a record of attendance. This data is then used to track and monitor all children to ensure effective and timely support is in place. Within the virtual school we have two specialist attendance officers that monitor attendance daily and work with schools and partners to ensure timely support is in place.

### Breakdown of Month-by-Month Attendance

Data Sept – July 2021/22

	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July 2022	JULY 2020/21
<b>Overall attendance Sept to Date %</b>	91%	89.5%	92.0%	90.4%	90.2%	91.0%	90.4%	90.4%	90.5%	90.0%	89.0%	80.0%
<b>Monthly attendance</b>	91%	89.0%	90.8%	89.2%	86.6%	90.0%	90.0%	91.0%	90.8%	86.0%	83.0%	75.0%
<b>Below 90% Sept to date</b>	21.0%	26.0%	24.0%	22.0%	25.1%	26.3%	26.3%	23.0%	24.0%	25.0%	39.0%	51.3%
<b>100% sept to date</b>	56.0%	43.0%	35.1%	29.0%	20%	20.0%	16.0%	17.0%	14.0%	12.1%	13.5%	8.1%

As you can see in the table the comparison to the end of this year is that our attendance has risen by 9% overall and our cumulative below 90% attendance is 12.3% lower. Those children who have achieved 100% attendance is also 5.4% higher than previous.

	2020-2021	2021-2022
Primary attendance %	92.8%	86.2%
Secondary attendance %	80.4%	86.3%
Children with 100% Attendance	8% (34 children)	13% (39 children)
Children with above 95% Attendance	45% (153 children)	55.4% (163 children)

% attendance		2019	2020**	2021
895	Cheshire East-LAC* Attendance	95.4		88.8
981	Northwest-LAC Attendance	94.6	-	90

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970	England-LAC Attendance	94.9	-	90.9
895	Cheshire East- All pupils Attendance	95.6	-	95.7
981	Northwest-All pupils Attendance	95.3	-	95.3
970	England-All pupils Attendance	95.3	-	95.4

\*LAC stands for looked after children which are known as cared for children in Cheshire East.

\*\* No national data was published in 2020

## Attendance Support provided by the virtual school

Our two specialist attendance officer have had a specific focus this year to ensure that we are able to report and record accurate attendance data ensuring we have systems in place to be able to track individual childrens data effectively, the overall cumulative attendance for this cohort has increased by 9% from July 2020 to July 2021; with the % of children below 90% attendance having reduced by 12.3%. Over the next 12 months following analysis of data, we will be focusing on targeted work for primary aged children and undertaking a deep dive of analysis for individual children and young people to understand the gap in the overall attendance of cared for children compared to all other children to further improve overall attendance. Our main aims next year will be to:

- Strengthen the work with key staff in schools to identify and resolve attendance concerns to ensure timely interventions and support in place.
- Work in conjunction with advisors to ensure clear communication and effective support.
- Meeting parents/carers and pupils at school or home to offer guidance and support.
- Jointly working alongside social care to ensure clear and consistent communication.
- Working alongside schools regarding education plans and development of bespoke packages where this is deemed necessary to support children's needs.
- Attending reintegration meetings following fixed term exclusions to support with next steps and effective planning to help reduce further repeat exclusions.
- Developing communication with supervising social workers so that carers can be encouraged and supported to help improve attendance, offering support and guidance.
- Robust tracking and monitoring to ensure that direct intervention is quickly put in place for when attendance falls below 95%.
- Continue to support Year 11 and Year 6 transitions during the summer holidays to be key point of contact for support.
- Review weekly/monthly/yearly attendance data that feed into scorecard to enable oversight by leaders to measure impact and outcomes.
- Deliver training and guidance on how to support improving attendance for schools and settings
- Provide training and support to foster carers
- Strengthen the monitoring systems in place to track post 16 college student's attendance



**Case Study of a Young Person That Has Received Attendance Support**

**Key Concerns during last academic year**

- Attendance
- Mental Health and wellbeing concerns
- Exclusions and unauthorised absences
- Child A received 38 half day exclusions
- Child A received unauthorised marks
- School, social worker and advisor agreed that needs were not being met in school

**Type of Intervention:**

- Home visits
- Alternative provision identified to support access to wider programmes of learning as part of school curriculum

**Impact of Intervention:**

- Child A started accessing alternative provision
- Child A has settled into the routine of attending school,
- Attendance has improved.

Attendance % prior to intervention - 46.38%

Fixed term exclusion % 31%

Attendance post intervention 75%



## Exclusions

The virtual school has a duty to work with head teachers to try and avoid excluding a child and to make sure that they have the support in place to thrive and make progress. During 2021/22 the virtual school has been quick in its response to exclusions so that a joint plan for the child can be implemented which identifies any key triggers and intervention required. If an exclusion was unavoidable then there were similar meetings held afterwards to try and avoid any repeat exclusions for children. Schools or carers are asked to inform the virtual school whenever an exclusion takes place. In the case of repeat exclusions, additional PEP meetings will be held to check that all necessary support is being given.

The virtual school has funded places at both the Fermain Academy and Cornerstones, and this has contributed to the reduction in some instances of repeat fixed term exclusions. The staff have accessed training through the virtual school on understanding the needs of children and how to support children with insecure attachment; pupil premium funding has been used to help provide a mentor/key worker to support our children as a champion.

There have been no cases of permanent exclusion in academic year 2021/22 with a decrease in primary exclusions from six individual fixed term exclusions recorded (for four individual children) last year to two individual exclusions recorded this year (for two individual children) this year of primary age. The data shows that there were 91 individual exclusions recorded (for 34 children) at secondary age.

The table below outlines fixed term exclusion data from 2018-2020 which shows that we have continued to see overall reduction within Cheshire east and are below both North-West and national figures.

% Of pupils with at least one fixed term exclusion from school		2018	2019	2020	2021
895	Cheshire East-% LAC fixed term exclusions	7.69	7.52	6.38	6.09
981	Northwest-% LAC fixed term exclusions	10.17	10.63	8.60	
970	England-% LAC fixed term exclusions	11.28	11.38	9.38	

Year	Proportion of pupils subject to fixed term exclusion	Number of pupils subject to FTE	Average Number of days lost per pupil
2017/18	10%		4 days
2018/19	12%		5 days
2019/20	9%	35	4.5 days
2020/21	8%	30	4 days
2021/22	6%	36	4.5 days

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## Participation of young people

The virtual school recognises that young people are at the heart of all its work and that to be effective in helping young people to succeed in education, their wishes and feelings must be listened to.

All young people are invited to contribute to their PEPs, either by attending the meeting or by sharing their thoughts on the 'my voice' form which can be presented at the meeting on their behalf. Specific interventions and plans are influenced by this input in a variety of ways such as:

- Deciding what subjects to have tutoring in and when/where this takes place based on aspirations
- Agreeing targets for improvement in attendance or behaviour
- Identifying any issues/concerns in school
- Deciding whether additional adult support, e.g., mentor is required

The 'my voice' document was further developed following a working group session led by the virtual school head teacher with several cared for children and care leavers who supported redesigning this document.

Where children are not attaining and are struggling in school the virtual school advisor works 1-1 to gain understanding from the child of what support can be put in place. The virtual school has dedicated learning mentors who work 1-1 with children, they work closely with schools to empower and train staff to continue to support children/young people.

Your input with the young people has been amazing since I have been in post as the manager. You are always proactive and willing to look at other solutions; you are dedicated to your role and make a massive difference to the young people's lives. You have been a great support to me as the registered manager with supporting with education. (Quote from Children's Homes Manager)

The Virtual School Post 16 support team are fabulous with my children. They can build positive relationships with young people. They are prepared to go above and beyond to support my young people. They are all very experienced and very creative with their thinking on identifying an education plan. It is very rare that I must remind them to do something. They are all very good at communication and nothing is too much trouble. I really appreciate everything you do for my young people, and I know this view is the same across the board. I would be very lost without you all. (Quote from a Social Worker)

To see young people, grow in confidence and find a career/education path that changes their lives is inspirational and a pleasure to be a part of makes me so proud to be part of a team that achieves this and on the journey with the young people. (Quote from Cared for Children and Care Leavers)



I just wanted to thank you both for all your help and support over the years. You have always been at the end of the phone (or email) if I needed anything, and the support Cheshire East have offered us as an 'out of authority' school has been fantastic! (Quote from a designated teacher)

"Thanks so much for all the great joined up work that is being undertaken. Great to hear the positives and that he is engaging with the support." (Quote from a social worker about school and mentor supporting a child)

Education is a strong point and the youth justice service education worker (YJS & VS advisor) sorted it out for me and I got into college. YJS are good at education.

(Quote from a cared for child also under the youth justice service)

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## Attainment

### Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) assessments

The EYFS profile is a statutory assessment of children's development at the end of the early years foundation stage (EYFS). A new EYFS was introduced in September 2021 with revised early learning goals (ELG's) making data comparison with previous years incomparable.

The EYFS profile is intended to provide a reliable, valid, and accurate assessment of each child's development at the end of the EYFS. It is made up of an assessment of the child's outcomes in relation to the 17 early learning goal (ELG) descriptors.

For each ELG, teachers must judge whether a child is: • meeting the level of development expected at the end of the EYFS (expected); or • not yet reaching this level (emerging)

Children are defined as having reached a good level of development (GLD) at the end of the EYFS if they have achieved at least the expected level for the ELGs in the prime areas of learning and the specific areas of mathematics and literacy.

There were 21 cared for children in reception as of July 2022 with 13 in the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months as of 31 March). Of the 13 eligible Reception age children 2 reached a good level of development in July 2022.

Group	Pupils	% Of results received
Full Cohort	20	
Out of area	4	
Out of Age Range	3	
Results received for	20	
Achieving GLD	5	25%
Expected in Writing	7	35%
Expected in Maths	8	40%

% GLD for the whole year was around 66% so significantly above the 25% for this group although the small size of the group is an important consideration.

Looking at individual learning areas the % reaching the expected level ranges from 35% (Self-regulation and Writing) to 75% (Being Imaginative ...). In the wider cohort the equivalent figures are 71% (Writing) to 94% (Gross Motor Skills)

During next academic year we will be reviewing the data for this cohort of children and working with the early years team to better understand the areas of support needed to develop clear interventions to support measuring impact. We will ensure that all PEPs are reviewed to incorporate SMART targets to ensure targeted intervention and support is in place.

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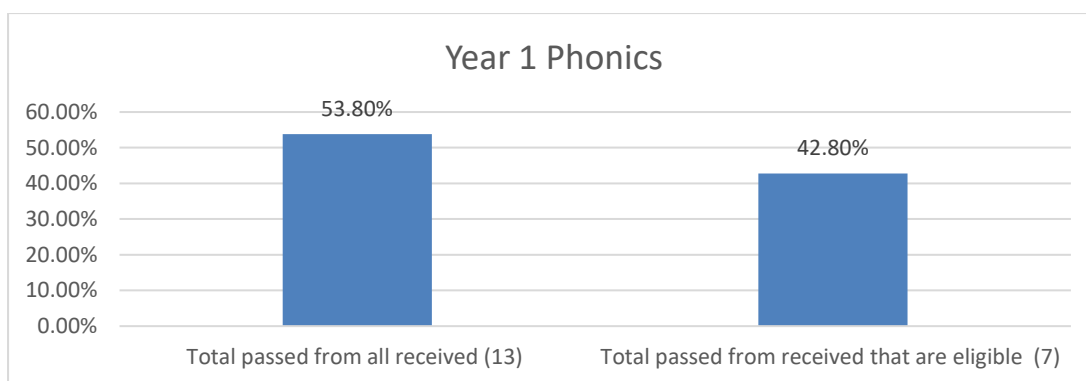




**Key Stage 1 \*data is not yet validated and may change during this period until publication**

### Year 1 Phonics

As of July 2022, there were 16 cared for children in total and 11 were within the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2021). We have received results for 13 children (7 are eligible).

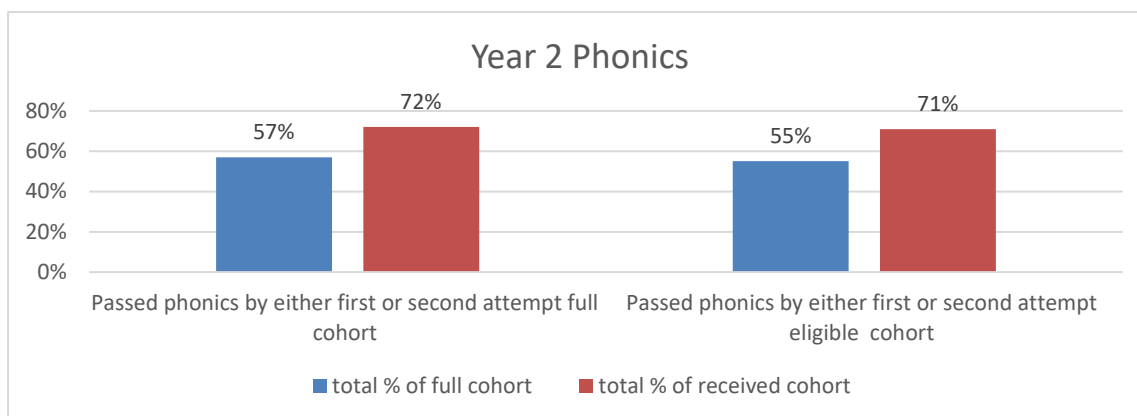


### Year 2

As of July 2022, there were 14 cared for children in total and 9 were within the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2021). We have received results for 11 children (7 are eligible).

### Phonics

Due to COVID some of our year 2 children sat their phonics assessments in the autumn term.

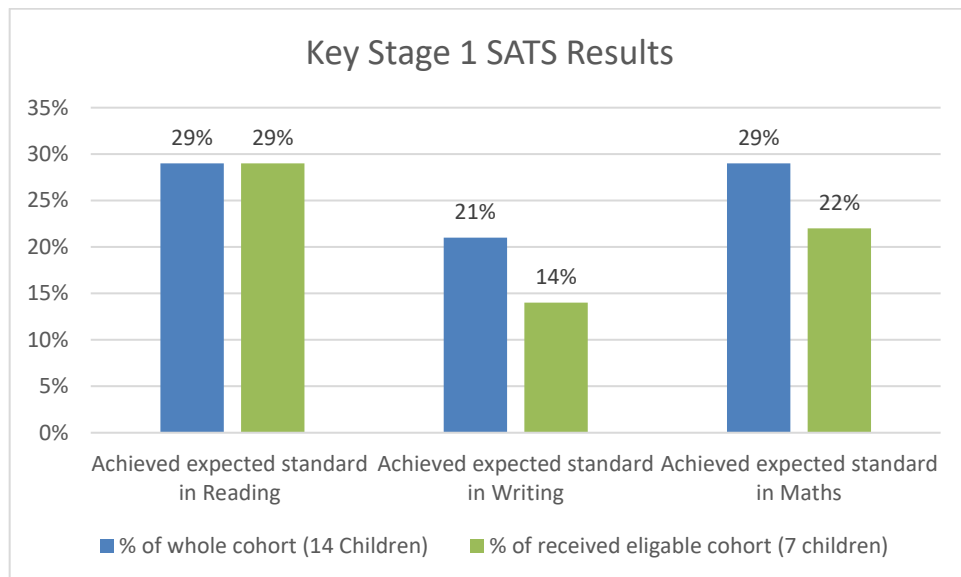


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## SATS

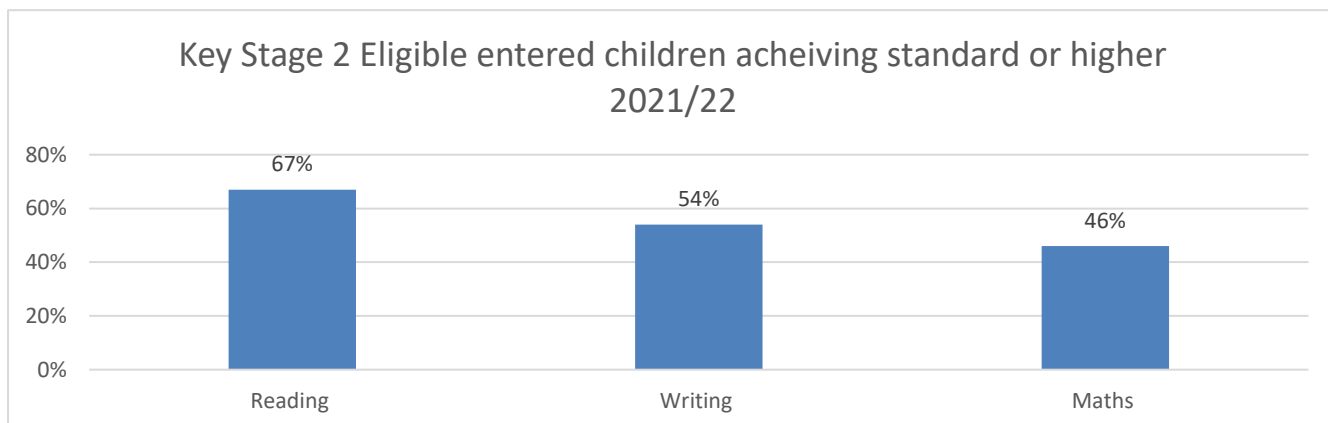


## Key Stage 2

As of July 2022, there were 31 cared for children with 28 within the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2021). 26 children (24 eligible children) were entered for the SATS tests. Of the 5 children not entered 4 were due to specific SEND needs and one was due to them being placed in a Welsh school where they do not sit SATS.

In all eligible cohort (total of 28 children)	Number of eligible children	Number of eligible children%	% Of entered cohort (24 children)
Achieved expected standard in Writing	11	39%	46%
Achieved greater depth in Writing	2	7%	8%
Achieved standard in Reading	16	57%	67%
Achieved standard in Maths	11	39%	46%
Achieved standard in Writing and Maths	9	32%	37.5%
Achieved standard in Reading, Writing and Maths	9	32%	37.5%





## Key Stage 4

At the end of the academic year July 2022, there were 61 children in total that are Cheshire East cared for children. Of the 61 there were 49 in the eligible cohort (in care for 12 months or more as of 31 March 2021). Of the 49 eligible, 36 were entered for GCSEs, (the other 13 children gained a range of other functional skills qualifications, most attended specialist schools for children with complex needs).

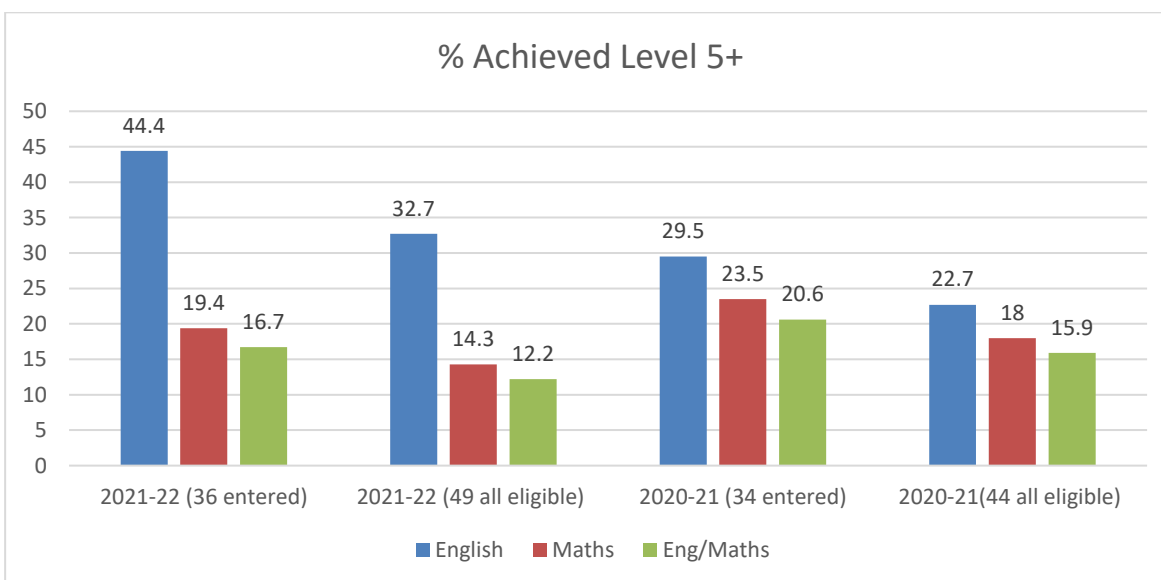
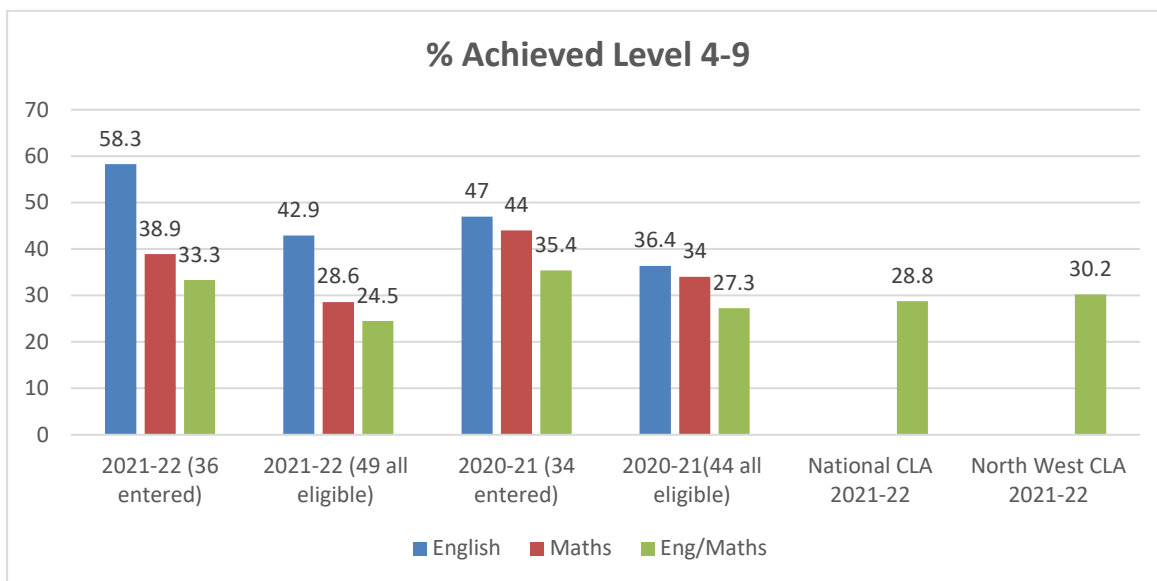
In all eligible cohort (total of 49 children)	Number of eligible children	Number of eligible children%	Number of entered cohort (36)	% Of entered cohort
Achieved 9-4 in English	21	42.9%	21	58.3%
Achieved 9-5 in English	16	32.7%	16	44.4%
Achieved 9-4 in Maths	14	28.6%	14	38.9%
Achieved 9-5 in Maths	7	14.3%	7	19.4%
Achieved 9-5 in English and Maths	6	12.2%	6	16.7%
Achieved 9-4 in English and Maths	12	24.5%	12	33.3%
Achieved 8 in English	1	2%	1	2.8%
Achieved 8 in Maths	1	2%	1	2.8%
Received grades for at least 5 GCSEs	31	63.3%	31	86.1%
Received grades for at least 8 GCSEs	16	32.7%	16	44.4%

\*Although data below includes that of this year and national, as per DfE/OFQUAL guidance this year's data should not be published or compared to previous years'/national data.

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% Of pupils achieving 9-4 pass in English and Maths		2019	2020	2021*
895	Cheshire East-9-4 English & Maths	15.00	36.60	33.3
981	Northwest-9-4 English & Maths	17.80	23.90	30.2
970	England-9-4 English & Maths	17.80	24.40	28.8

\*Provisional early data collected on results day and is for all eligible pupils entered for GCSE or equivalent examinations.

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Although the 2021 result based on the provisional data is down by 3.3 percentage points on last year it is still significantly higher than the results for England and the Northwest. During next academic year we will work with schools and settings to focus in specific areas such as maths, as this has seen a decrease with attainment levels this year.

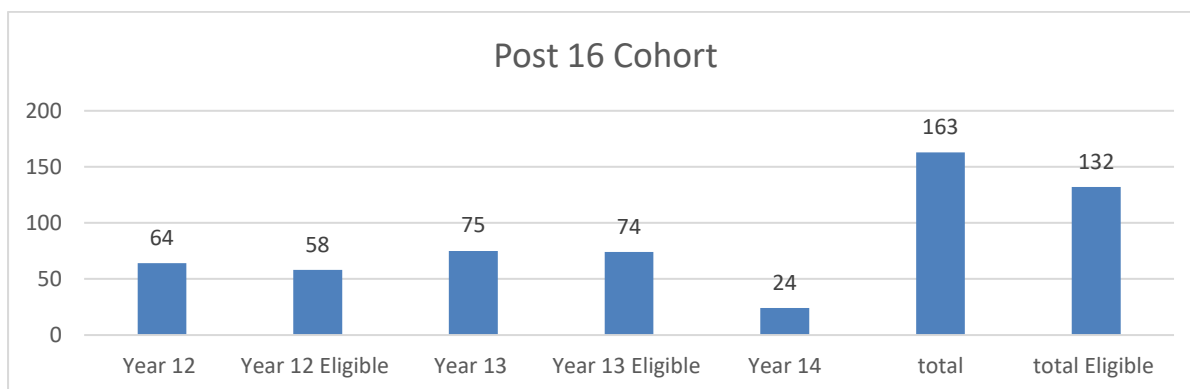
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## Post-16 education, employment, and training



### Year 12

At the end of the academic year 2021/2022, there were 58 eligible students in total. Of this, 7 were not in education, employment, or training (12%), a number now have clear next steps and pathways of which

3 have an offer of a place in college from September 2022, 1 has applied to the army and 1 young person has secured an apprenticeship.

Of this cohort a further 8 young people are on re-engagement programme being supported by the post 16 tutor and accessing the venture with confidence programme 7 young people are in employment.

Students have engaged in a range of post 16 pathways, including specialist provision, college courses ranging from Entry Level to Level 3, apprenticeships, and re-engagement programmes.

54 young people have a clear post 16 pathway in place for September 2022 (93%). The virtual school are working alongside social care and wider services to ensure that all young people have access to support and services.

### Qualifications 2021/2022

All eligible Year 12 students who were entered for examinations achieved a pass in every subject as listed below.

Vocational Entry Level	Level 1:	Level 2:	Level 3(first year):
1	9	7	3

A Levels (1st year):	4
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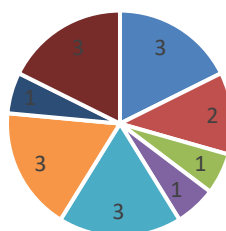


ESOL	Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3
6	3	2	1

GCSE	English	Maths	Science
19	7	10	2

Functional Skills	English Entry 2	English Entry 3	English Level 1	English Level 2
	1	1	1	2
Maths Entry 1	Maths Entry 2	Maths Entry 3	Maths Level 1	Maths Level 2
1	2	6	2	2

## Year 12 Additional Learning Pathways



- ASDAN
- Apprenticeship
- Individual learning plan (in specialist provision)
- Apprenticeship
- Bronze Duke of Edinburgh
- Princes Trust
- Venture with confidence
- Employment

## Year 13

### Qualifications 2021/2022

All eligible Year 13 students entered for an examination passed at the levels below:

Vocational Qualifications	Entry Level 1	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3 (first year)	Level 3 (Second Year)
	1	5	7	2	6

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A Levels:	3
A Levels (first year):	1

**A Level Results:**

**Classics A**

**English Language B**

**English Language C**

**Textiles B**

**History C**

**Design and Technology C**

**Art C**

**Art D**

**Geography D**

Apprenticeship:	1
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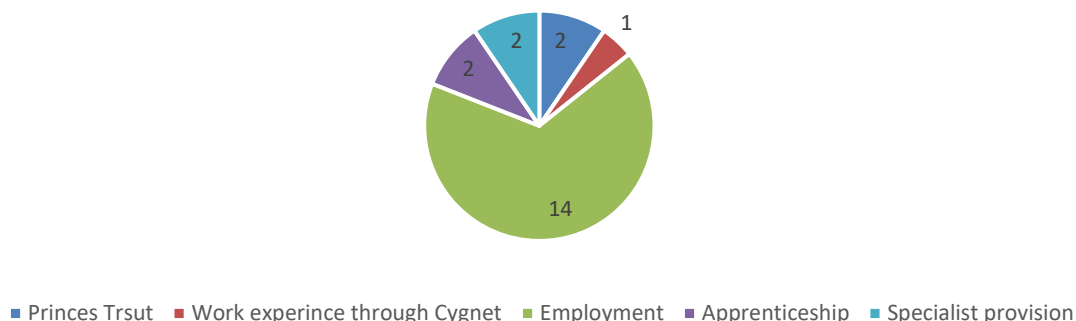
ESOL	Entry 1	Entry 2
	8	5

GCSE	English	Maths
	3	6

Functional Skills	English Entry 3	Maths Entry 1	Maths Entry 3	Maths Level 2
	3	6	5	1



### Year 13 Additional Learning Pathways



At the end of the academic year 2021/2022, there were 75 students in total. 76% of young people (57 students) have a pathway in place for September 2022. These pathways include university, college/training, work, and apprenticeships.

Of the 75 students in the overall cohort 18 were not accessing education, employment, or training which equates 21.3% (20.2% of the eligible cohort), this was a reduction compared to the same time last year.

All these young people will continue to be supported by the cared for and care leavers team working alongside the virtual school advisor and wider services to ensure all support is in place.

#### Apprenticeships

4 young people are successfully currently on an apprenticeship in year 13 and will continue to be supported.

### Year 14 and 14+ Students

#### Qualifications 2021/2022

Vocational Qualifications	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3 (First Year)	Level 3 (Second year)
	1	4	2	4

ESOL	Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3
	1	1	1

OFFICIAL

4!



## Apprenticeships:

7 young people are currently on an apprenticeship programme within a wide range of areas including outdoor education, electrician, childcare, and teaching assistants.

To ensure effective and timely support is in place the NEET challenge panel takes place monthly, monitoring destinations of all relevant and former relevant cared for children and care leavers in Cheshire East. The virtual school, care leaver service and Journey First attend meetings to identify barriers and discuss best ways to support young people who are not in education, employment, or training or at risk of becoming NEET. The NEET figure in August 2022 was 26% which is an improvement compared to 28% in August 2021.

## University 2022

There are four students starting at the following universities this year.

Keele University - Law

University of Bangor – Product Design

Liverpool John Moores University – Criminology and Sociology

Edge Hill University – English Literature

16 pupils are successfully continuing and progressing onto the next phase of their course at a range of universities, including Manchester Metropolitan, University of York, and Leeds.

1 student has just successfully completed her degree in Fine Art.



## Service Objectives 2020/21

Strategic priority	Summary	Lead	Achieved/Some Progress/ Not achieved
Implement a Governing Body to ensure governance and scrutiny to include core members from across key partners and stakeholders	To introduce a Governing Body, to include key partners from across all key stakeholders including foster carers, health, social care, members and education	LR	Achieved – In place with representatives from across all key stakeholders included, continue next year to embed
Work with council leaders to ensure development of apprenticeship opportunities for our cared for children/care leavers.	To work with the cared for/care leavers service and Workforce Development to secure opportunities across the council	LR/CL/KF/AP	Some progress – apprenticeship lead is being appointed within the council, led by AP. Successful progression of apprentices this year
Development of a pupil council voice to ensure our children/young people are fully involved with key developments across the service.	To ensure the development of the child's voice regarding strategic developments across the service	LR/Participation Team	Some progress – Survey in progress to capture children and young people's views, continue to focus on this next year for analysis of returns and next steps
Work alongside council members as part of the corporate parenting strategy to develop access to front line services.	Members to support: Governing Body, Priority 2 workstream, direct work with children and young people to improve access to education	LR/KB	Achieved – Member representatives allocated to all group and workstreams.





Continue to provide support and interventions for schools and children to improve outcomes (narrow the gap and lost learning) and attendance, evaluating the impact of the intervention and use of pupil premium. In relation to the return to schools following impact from Covid-19.	<p>Monitor requests and impact of pupil premium and develop a system to ensure schools are made accountable for impact.</p> <p>Embed locality model working to support children and schools. Improve outcomes for all years and support with impact from Covid-19 and gaps in learning.</p> <p>Improve literacy and communication of Early Years and primary aged children.</p>	LR/VS team/DVSH/EY team	partially/ongoing as a key focus area over the next year 12 months
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<p>Identify and implement changes resulting from the Social Care Act 2017 which includes Virtual School Head Teacher to have responsibilities for previously looked after children as well as looked after and to promote mental health and attachment awareness in schools</p>	<p>Continue to review the impact of staffing changes and use of funding to support improving outcomes of children.</p> <p>Adapt training to increase support to schools to offer staff CPD to increase Attachment and Trauma awareness.</p> <p>Continue to work alongside Adoption Counts to develop information and guidance for previously cared for and adopted children.</p> <p>Continue to work alongside regional VS partners to share good practise.</p> <p>Continue to develop online webpages and resources to further support advice and guidance.</p>	<p>LR/CL</p>	<p>Achieved – will be ongoing to ensure we are continuing to strengthen our support, to include new DfE extended duties for children with a social worker.</p>
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Monitor the impact of commissioned and front-line services through engagement, progress, and outcomes	<p>Work with procurement and commissioning to develop monitoring process for commissioned services.</p> <p>Increase direct supervision of commissioned service and clarify expectations to be achieved.</p>	LR/VS team/commissioning	<p>Achieved – ongoing to ensure we are embedding monitoring of commissioned services to ensure quality and value for money.</p> <p>Key focus next year will be to ensure we have systems in place to easily report and record impact data linked to commissioned services.</p>
	<p>Review and monitor the impact of commissioned service to ensure quality and value for money.</p> <p>Continue to work with alternative provisions to ensure outcomes of children accessing alternative provision is further improved.</p> <p>Work alongside social care to ensure education involvement with Bespoke and Mockingbird.</p>		



<p>Improve completion rate and quality of PEPs and develop to extend to Early Years and Post 16</p>	<p>Review and roll out pilot for online PEP for early years and post 16 providers.</p> <p>Continue to improve completion rate of PEPs (termly).</p> <p>Continue to improve number of PEPs graded as 'Good'/'Outstanding', sharing best practise within locality network sessions.</p> <p>Develop PEP to ensure PFA is a clear focus</p>	<p>LR/CL</p>	<p>Some progress – ongoing to ensure that quality continues to be improved and consistent.</p>
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## Development Priorities for 2022-23

In addition to the specific actions included in the various sections of the report the virtual school has identified the following priority areas and key actions to be addressed this year.

### Strategic Priorities for 2022-23:

1. **The governing body to ensure governance and scrutiny to include core members from across key partners and stakeholders.**
  - Scrutinise the attendance, progress and outcomes of pupils and effectiveness of interventions to ensure impact on the lived experience of pupils
  - Evaluate methods of capturing and using pupil voice to ensure our children/young people are fully involved with key developments across the service.
  - Adapt training to increase support including understanding the needs of cared for children, attachment and trauma and mental health and wellbeing.
  - To work alongside social care implementing extended duties for children with a social worker to ensure we have a clear framework and universal offer of support and guidance.
  - Monitor the impact of placement moves on children's education to ensure it is sufficiently considered by multi-agency partners
2. **To provide support and interventions for schools and children to improve outcomes (narrow the gap and lost learning) and attendance, evaluating the impact of the intervention and use of pupil premium.**
  - Improve literacy and communication of early years and primary aged children to improve the percentage achieving GLD.
  - Monitor requests and impact of pupil premium and develop a system to ensure schools are held accountable for and can report and record impact.
  - Identify schools where progress is below expected and use self-evaluation to plan for improvement.
  - Share best practice where pupils achieve above expectations through training
3. **To ensure sufficiently robust plans address low engagement in education.**
  - Work with social care and wider partners to strengthen the support for our most vulnerable, ensuring attendance is a key priority and ensure all pupils have a full-time timetable with appropriate levels of tuition.
  - Work with social care and wider partners to improve the systems for planning of placement/school moves.
  - Continue to work with alternative provisions to ensure attendance and outcomes of children accessing alternative provision is further improved, ensure clear framework/protocol and procedures are in place.



4. **To further improve the quality of PEPs ensuring increased targeted support and interventions for pupils where this is needed to improve progress and outcomes**
  - Strengthen the moderation process identifying good practice and areas of learning and disseminate leading to continuous improvement PEPs
  - Further improve systems and recording tools across SEND and virtual school to ensure alignment of EHCP reviews and PEPs
  - Review pilot for our online PEP system for early years and post 16 providers.
  - Continue to improve completion rate of PEPs (termly).
  - Continue to improve number of PEPs graded as 'good' / 'outstanding', sharing best practice within locality network sessions
  - Develop the PEP to ensure preparing for adulthood is a clear focus.
  
5. **Review and monitor the impact of commissioned service to ensure quality and value for money.**
  - Monitor the impact of commissioned and front-line services through engagement, progress, and outcomes.
  - Increase direct supervision of commissioned service and clarify expectations to be achieved.





*Working for a brighter future together*

## **Corporate Parenting Committee**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> November 2022
<b>Report Title:</b>	Corporate Parenting Q1 score card 2022/23
<b>Report of:</b>	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
<b>Report Reference No:</b>	To be provided by Democratic Services
<b>Ward(s) Affected:</b>	All Wards

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### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1.** This report sets out the performance for corporate parenting for quarter 1 of 2022-23 (1 April 2022 – 30 June 2022). The Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to note the performance for quarter 1 and to provide support and challenge in relation to performance for children and young people.

### **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1** This report provides an overview of quarter 1 performance for children and families services for the relevant indicators for the reporting year of 2022-23

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1.** The Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to:
- 3.2** note the performance of children's services for quarter 1.
- 3.3** provide scrutiny in relation to performance of children and families services.



**4. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1.** One of the key areas of focus for the Corporate Parenting Committee is to review performance and scrutinise the effectiveness of services for cared for children and young people and care leavers.

**5. Other Options Considered**

- 5.1.** Not applicable

**6. Background**

- 6.1.** This quarterly report provides the committee with an overview of performance across Cared For Children and Care Leaver's service. This report relates to quarter 1 of 2022-23 (1 April 2022 – 30 June 2022).

- 6.2.** The following indicators have been highlighted for consideration

**7. Briefing information**

- 7.1** Cheshire East Council were responsible for 522 cared for children at the end of quarter 1. The cared for children population changes daily as children enter and leave care. Children cease to be cared for due to several reasons, these include turning 18, returning to their birth family, adoption, and special guardianship. The latest comparable data we have across the region shows that Cheshire East's rate is in line with the latest available national average which is 67 per 10,000 but is slightly above that of our statistical neighbours.

- 7.2** We have seen an increase in the number of children entering care from 132 in 2020/21 to 160 in 2021/22. Much of this increase relates to UASC becoming cared for. We have recently seen an increase in young people who have been placed in hotels by the Home Office, who subsequently challenge their age and are then accommodated if they are assessed as being under 18. We are constantly monitoring the numbers of Cared For children and looking at ways to ensure that we are reviewing plans for children to achieve permanence at the earliest opportunity. Positively, the number of children where care orders have been discharged is increasing; so far this year (21.09 2022) we have discharged care orders for 11 children and there are several applications currently before the court so we are hopeful that this number will increase. Overall last year, we achieved 17 discharges of care orders and 7 the year before. The progress we are making represents a positive picture.

- 7.3** However, we are not making as much progress as we would like with discharging Care Orders, this is primarily due to staff shortages across the service and the need to prioritise our statutory work. We are actively looking at ways to increase our staffing, but this is proving difficult. At the

time of writing this report, the Cared For Service has 9.5 social work vacancies out of an establishment of 24. Capacity within the service is therefore at a critical level. As an interim measure we are seeking support from other areas to ensure that we are able to meet statutory obligations.

- 7.4** The timeliness of cared for children's reviews continues to be good and in Q1, this was at 94%. Additionally, 95% of children were involved in their reviews. It is important that children and young people are involved in their plan, and we are always looking at how we can develop and improve their participation.
- 7.5** Q1 data shows an increase in children placed with in-house foster carers (123 in Q1 compared to 120 in Q4). This is positive and there are plans in place to increase recruitment of foster carers, which will mean that we can place more of our children with Cheshire East foster carers. Generally, we want children to remain local and within Cheshire East where possible. For some children, they may live out of the area because they need a specialist placement, or they want to be close to birth family who have moved away. Arrangements for any child who lives at a distance are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure this remains appropriate.
- 7.6** We had worked hard to reduce the number of children in residential care but recently we have seen an increase in children being placed in residential care. In Q1, the number of children living in residential care is 36 and was 31 at the end of Q4. We remain committed to ensuring that children have the opportunity of living within a family wherever possible and believe that the increase is largely due to the national shortage of foster placements available to children. Currently we have 6.73% of our cared for children living in residential care, the national average is 10%.
- 7.7** The number of adoptions continues to slowly increase with 5 children adopted so far this year and another 10 living in their adoption placements. Of the 5 children legally adopted so far this year, unfortunately the number of days from entering care to moving into placement with an adoptive family is skewed by a small number of children where there has been delay. For example, one was 1,207 days, which will have impacted our average number of days for the 5 adoptions to date. Locally and nationally the timescales for placing children within their adoptive families is monitored to avoid unnecessary delay for children. Pre-pandemic Cheshire East were in a strong position in relation to timeliness, above the regional and national average. However, this has been significantly impacted because of the complexities involved in facilitating transitions and the impact of Covid-19. For those children where delay was experienced, their individual circumstances are well understood, and we continue to scrutinise planning to ensure that children do not experience unnecessary delay.

- 7.8** The number of 16 to 18-year-old young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) is low. We have a dedicated 16 plus advisor within the virtual school, and this reflects the proactive work to keep our young people in education or support them into employment and training.
- 7.9** The number of 16 to 18-year-old young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is low. We have a dedicated 16 plus advisor within the virtual school, and this reflects the proactive work to keep our young people in education or support them into employment and training.
- 7.10** The NEET data for our 19 to 21-year-old young people shows that 46% of this cohort are not engaged in education, employment, or training. The national average for 2020/21 was 48% with statistical neighbours being 47%. We are looking closely at this data and the circumstances for these young adults which include pregnancy, parenting or illness, but are not exclusive to this.
- 7.11** The next NEET programme is currently being planned and will run for 12 weeks during the autumn/winter term. This is a good way of engaging our young people and it is successful as a pathway to get young people involved in a range of activities and into education, employment, or training. Previous NEET programmes have seen real successes for our young people.
- 7.12** Whilst most health assessments are being requested within 48 hours of children entering care (71% in Q1) there has been a decline from 84% in Q4. This is likely to be an impact of significant staff shortages, particularly social workers across all service areas. This data will be discussed with health colleagues to see what is causing delay so we can truly understand the full picture and manage this to ensure that the timeliness of health assessments for children improves.
- 7.13** Q1 data shows a decline in children seeing a dentist to 37% from 51% in Q4. We are working to try and look at how we capture this data as we believe these figures are not a true representation. One of the things we are doing is adding in a mandatory question within the Statutory review process so that we have a better and more accurate picture of this information.
- 7.14** Q1 data shows that 96% of our care leavers are in appropriate accommodation. This is not 100% because we have a small number of young people who are in prison, and this is never recorded as being appropriate. This is currently less than five and as such the number is suppressed in line with DfE guidelines. Nationally the latest available data

reported 95% of care leavers in suitable accommodation with 3% being in custody; the other main reasons for accommodation being classed as unsuitable is emergency accommodation or homelessness.

- 7.15 81% of care leavers have up-to-date pathway plans and 53% of care leavers had their plans reviewed within timescales. We are aware that there are issues in respect of pathway plans being reviewed and we are changing the way in which pathway plans are reviewed. This work will now transfer to the safeguarding service to ensure that our care leavers have their pathway plans reviewed in a timelier way and to allow for external scrutiny.

## 8. Consultation and Engagement

- 8.1. Not applicable.

## 9. Implications

### 10. Legal

- 10.1. There are no direct legal implications.

### 11. Finance

- 11.1 Although there are no direct financial implications or changes to the MTFS as a result of this briefing paper, performance measures may be used as an indicator of budget pressures at a service level

### 12. Policy

- 12.1 There are no direct policy implications.

### 13. Equality

- 13.1 Members may want to use the information from the performance indicators to ensure that services are targeted at more vulnerable children and young people.

### 14. Human Resources

- 14.1 There are no direct human resources implications.

### 15. Risk Management

**15.1** There are risks associated with some performance measures, e.g. increases in demand and timeliness of services.

**16. Rural Communities**

**16.1** There are no direct implications for rural communities.

**17. Children and Young People/Cared for Children**

**17.1** Performance reports enable members to identify areas of good performance and areas for improvement in relation to children and young people, including cared for children.

**18. Public Health**

**18.1** There are no direct implications for public health.

**19. Climate Change**

**19.1** This report does not impact on climate change.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Annemarie Parker
Appendices:	Corporate Parenting Score Card Q1
Background Papers:	None

## Corporate Parenting Scorecard

Ref		Polarity	Stat Neigh Av	National Av	2021-22 yr end outturn	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23
<b>General</b>										
G1	Number of cared for children		626	80850	522	522	522			
G2	Rate per 10,000 cared for children		60	67	67	67	67			
G3	Number of care leavers (aged 16-21)					248	279			
<b>Priority 1 - We will care for our Children and Young People as any good parent would.</b>										
P1.1	% cared for children reviews in timescales	High is Good			90%	90%	94%			
P1.2	% of children and young people involved in their reviews	High is Good			99%	99%	95%			
<b>Priority 2 - Improved Education, Employment and Training outcomes</b>										
P2.1	Number of 16-18 year olds in care that are NEET (monthly)	Low is Good				8	7			
P2.2	Number of 16-18 year old care leavers that are NEET	Low is Good				9	13			
P2.3	Number of care leavers accessing higher education (University)	High is Good				18	19			
P2.4	Number of Cheshire East care leavers in apprenticeships (18+)	High is Good				7	8			
P2.5	% 19-21 year care leavers that are NEET (as per national reporting)	Low is Good	47%	48%	41%	41%	46%			
P2.6	Speak to Laura Rogerson re PEP and virtual school suitable indicators									
<b>Priority 3 - We will work to give all children and young people a forever home and keep them safe</b>										
P3.1	Number of cared for children in external foster care	Low is Good				135	138			
P3.2	Number of cared for children in internal foster care	High is Good				120	123			
P3.3	Number of children in care living with relatives and friends (inc reg 24)					79	79			
P3.4	Number of children placed with parents					53	60			
P3.5	Number of children and young people in residential care	Low is Good				31	36			
P3.6	Reduction of children in residential care (quarter calculation based on above)					N/A	Increase of 5			
P3.7	% of commissioned residential care provision occupied (currently 6 beds)	High is Good				50%	67%			
P3.8	Number of individuals with 3 or more placements (rolling 12mth figure)	Low is Good				61	64			
P3.9	% cared for children in care for at least 2.5yrs at the end of the period and living in their current placement for at least 2 years	High is Good	70%	70%	70%	70%	67%			
P3.10	Number of cared for children placed over 20 miles from home address (Cheshire East and out of borough)	Low is Good				123	122			
P3.11	Number of children living out of borough	Low is Good				206	214			
P3.12	Number of cared for children who have been missing in the quarter	Low is Good				33	35			
P3.13	Number of children who have a long term matched placement	High is Good				132	133			
P3.14	Number of placement moves in the quarter	Low is Good				79 (67 individuals)	66 (52 individuals)			
P3.15	% of currently cared for children who have had a C&F assessment in the last 12 mths	High is Good					84%			
P3.16	% of Cared for Children in care for more that 1 mth who have had a review in the last 6 mths	High is Good					91.6%			
P3.17	% of children ceased to be looked after due to granting of special guardianship order (SGO) - year to date figure	High is Good	13%	14%	11.3%	11.3%	8%			
P3.18	% of children ceased to be looked after due to adoption - year to date figure	High is Good	12%	10%	9.3%	9.3%	11%			



## Corporate Parenting Scorecard

Ref		Polarity	Stat Neigh Av	National Av	2021-22 yr end outturn	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23
P3.19	Number of children with an adoption decision					25	33			
P3.20	Average number of days between entering care and moving in with adoptive family (A10 national indicator) - yearly figure	Low is Good		376		611	589			
P3.21	Average number of days between placement order and match with adoptive family (A2 national indicator) - yearly figure	Low is Good		185		212	219			
<b>Priority 4 - We will Improve Health and Wellbeing Outcomes</b>										
P4.1	% of initial health assessments requested within 48 hours of coming into care	High is Good				84%	71%			
P4.2	% of initial health assessments completed by paediatricians within 20 working days	High is Good				69%	68%			
P4.3	% of review health assessments completed (year to date figure)	High is Good	89%	91%	80%	80%	80%			
P4.4	% with annual dental check	High is Good	43%	40%	51%	51%	5%			
P4.5	% of 4-16 in care for 3 months or more with a completed SDQ score in the last 12 mths	High is Good					45%			
P4.6	% of young people with a SDQ score of 20 or above	Low is Good				30%	29%			
P4.7	Number of care leavers with a health passport	High is Good				12/15 80%	14/14 100%			
<b>Priority 5 - We will prepare young people for Adulthood</b>										
P5.1	% of care leavers aged 16-21 with an up to date pathway plan in the last 6 mths	High is Good					81%			
P5.2	% of pathway plan reviews completed in timescales in the quarter	High is Good				72%	53%			
P5.3	% of pathway plan reviews completed in the quarter where Young persons view were not sent/ gained	Low is Good				0%	38%			
P5.4	% of former relevant care leaver aged 18-21 that we are in touch with	High is Good					98%			
P5.5	% of 16-17 years old currently cared for with a PA allocated	High is Good					53%			
P5.6	% of 17-18 former relevant care leavers in suitable accommodation	High is Good	92%	91%		96%	89%			
P5.7	% of 19-21 former relevant care leavers in suitable accommodation	High is Good	89%	88%		99%	96%			
P5.8	Number current UASC being cared for				21	21	24%			
P5.9	Number current/ former UASC care leavers (aged 18-24)						55			
P5.10	Number of individuals in staying put arrangement					38	38			