

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Committee**
held on Tuesday, 6th September, 2016 in Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor G Hayes (Chairman)
Councillor G Merry (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors B Dooley, S Edgar, D Flude, S Pochin, L Smetham and M Warren

Officers in attendance:

Nicola Axford – Headteacher, Virtual School for Cared For Children
Gill Betton – Head of Children’s Development and Partnerships
Jacky Forster – Director of Education and 14-19 Skills
Peter Lambert – Head of Cared for Children
Nigel Moorhouse – Director of Children’s Social Care
Cherry Foreman – Democratic Services Officer

7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Butterill, M Grant, J Saunders and M Simon.

8 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

9 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2016 were approved as a correct record.

10 VOICE OF THE CHILD

The Committee watched a video presentation ‘changing the narrative about the care system: views from children and young people’. This was a compilation of views, opinions and experiences of a wide age range of children and young people who had been directly involved with the care system. Drawing on their personal stories the video sought to explain what the experience had been like for them and it included some of the highs, lows and particular aspects which had affected or helped them personally.

All agreed the video had a strong impact as it was based on direct experiences of the care system. Members were advised that it was hoped that representatives of children in care and care leavers from Cheshire East would become involved with the work of the Committee and that the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman would be meeting with some of them in the near future to explore this further.

RESOLVED

That the video be noted.

11 FOCUS AREA - ROLE AND PURPOSE OF THE VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Consideration was given to a report on the role and purpose of the Virtual School including information on the duties of the local authority in promoting the education of cared for children and the arrangements in Cheshire East.

The Director of Education and 16-19 Skills, and the Headteacher of the Virtual School for Cared For Children, gave a joint presentation on its main aims which included closing the attainment and progress gap between looked after children and their peers by creating a culture of high aspirations for them; by ensuring they had access to a suitable range of high quality education placement options; robust procedures were in place to monitor attendance and progress, and that the educational experiences raised by looked after children were responded to effectively.

The role of the Virtual School Head was to ensure effective arrangements were in place to support these key objectives and that the child's views were also taken into account in meeting their educational needs. The importance of working with the range of other people involved in supporting the child was stressed including the Schools themselves, ensuring appropriate training was given and the best possible education secured for the child. The pupil premium, admission and exclusion provisions were also explained.

In some cases the past experiences of looked after children impacted on their ability to do certain school tasks and positive interventions to overcome such difficulties were, therefore, put in place. Discussion centred on how a child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) was developed so as to support the personalised learning of that child and the Committee requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee exploring this aspect further, including how to ensure the PEP was maintained and implemented.

The presentation also included a partial overview of the educational outcomes of cared for children in the last educational year and it was noted that a full analyses would be provided when the published data was available.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That reports on Personal Education Plans, and on the educational outcomes for the last educational year, be submitted to future meetings of the Committee.

12 CORPORATE PARENTING UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report on national and local developments in relation to cared for children and young people and care leavers and a resume was given of the main elements of the following publications:

- The Children and Social Work Bill

- Two DfE publications entitled '*Children's social care reform: a vision for change*' and '*Putting Children First: delivering our vision for excellent children's social care*'
- The Government publication 'Keep on Caring'
- An Independent report by Sir Martin Narey on children's residential care
- Report of the Care Quality Commission 'Not Seen, Not Heard'

And on local developments in respect of:

- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
- The Care Leaver Pledge
- DfE Innovation Fund Expressions of Interest
- Cheshire East Children's Rights and Participation Service
- The You Can Foster campaign and the Foster Carer survey
- Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report

Consideration was also given to the Corporate Parenting Performance Scorecard and to an extract taken from the information currently scrutinised by the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee. It was proposed that this be reported to the Committee on a quarterly basis and it was agreed the Corporate Parenting Operational Group consider the addition of further areas of particular relevance to this Committee in line with those outlined in para 5.25 of the report.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Corporate Parenting Operational Group consider the addition of further measures to the scorecard, of particular relevance to the Committee, in order to enable it to scrutinise and challenge performance and improve the outcomes for cared for children and young people.

13 CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD DEVELOPMENT

The Committee was asked to consider areas of training needed to help in its role as an advisory committee to the Cabinet, in ensuring the Council discharged its role as Corporate Parent for all children and young people in care and care leavers from 0 – 25 years of age, and held partners to account for the discharge of their responsibilities.

It was recognized that there was a range of knowledge and experience on the Committee and that its work programme already included a number of in depth focus areas to which it was requested items be added on support for the 16+ age group and care leavers up to 25 years of age, the integration of asylum seekers and the psychological effects on children born of drug/alcohol dependent mothers.

It was agreed that the Corporate Parenting Operational Group continue to develop the work and training programmes, with the inclusion of these and other items to be drawn from the Corporate Parenting Scorecard and as and when a particular need or request arose.

The Committee also stressed the fact that all councillors held the role of corporate parent and needed to consider the needs and requirements of cared

for children at all times. The Committee considered that training for this role should be compulsory for all Councillors.

RESOLVED

That the training and development of the Committee continue as set out above and that, in addition, a training session be given to all Members of the Council on their role as corporate parent.

14 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the proposed work programme. Focus areas were listed for future meetings in addition to which the following items would be added as had been agreed during the course of this meeting:

- Virtual School – Personal Education Plans and outcomes of the last educational year
- Quarterly Report on the Corporate Parenting Scorecard
- Support for the 16+ age group and care leavers up to 25 years of age
- Integration of asylum seekers
- The psychological effects of children born to alcohol or drug dependant mothers

RESOLVED

That the proposed work programme and its additions be approved.

The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and concluded at 7.00 pm

Councillor G Hayes (Chairman)