

Cheshire East Council

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 1st November 2016

Report of: Pete Lambert, Head of Cared for Children

Subject/Title: Corporate Parenting Update

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Liz Durham

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an update to the Corporate Parenting Committee on national and local developments in relation to cared for children and young people and care leavers.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to:
 - 2.1.1 Note the contents of the report;
 - 2.1.2 Note the proposed future updates around national and local developments; and
 - 2.1.3 Endorse the proposed scorecard measures at Appendix 2.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

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

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. None; this is an update report.

5. Background

National Developments

In Care, Out of Trouble

- 5.1. *In Care, Out of Trouble*, is an independent review, chaired by Lord Laming. The review was established by Prison Reform Trust to examine the

reasons for, and how best to tackle, the over representation of children in care, or with experience of care, in the criminal justice system in England and Wales.

- 5.2. The review sets out a number of recommendations with associated actions that it wishes to see as outcomes, including:

Outcome 1: Strong and determined leadership at national and local level drives a strategic, multi-agency approach to protecting children in care from criminalisation.

Outcome 2: The important role of early support for children and families at risk is recognised.

Outcome 3: Good parenting by the state gives children in care the chance to thrive and protects them from criminalisation.

Outcome 4: Needs and characteristics of looked after children in minority groups are taken into account in protecting them from criminalisation.

Outcome 5: Effective prevention, diversion and rehabilitation - close joint work is pivotal between children's social care, youth justice services, child and adolescent mental health services, the police, the Crown Prosecution Service, the courts and the secure estate.

Outcome 6: Young people leaving care continue to benefit from good parenting and are protected from criminalisation.

Local Developments

Children's Home Recommissioning

- 5.3. Cabinet received a report earlier in the year setting out an approach to the redesign of children's homes in the borough. Cabinet agreed a timeline to put in place a wholly commissioned children's home service from 1 April 2017. A fully compliant procurement process is being followed which will enable an effective and transparent contract award to be undertaken. Work has progressed as planned and the expected date to award the contract is 8th November 2016, with services being effective from April 2017.

Regional Adoption Developments

- 5.4. Cheshire East continues to work with partners towards the launch of the Regional Adoption Agency in April 2017. Appointments are currently being made to the senior positions to enable the full staff structure to begin to take shape. Between now and Christmas it is expected that progress will be made with all workstreams to confirm, for example, office locations, funding formulas, panel processes and team structures.

Education Update

- 5.5. All the young people who completed Year 11 in July 2016 continue to be supported by the Virtual School. There are thirty three young people in this

group, which includes thirteen who entered care since March 2015, two of which were asylum seeking children. Thirty of these young people are now in education, training or engagement activities and three are not in education, employment or training (NEET). All the NEET young people are girls; one of these has recently had a baby, another left college and has moved from carers to live with family and is also pregnant and the third who was previously supported by medical needs is now in a residential placement out of the area and is being given a wide range of opportunities to find a course which she can manage and which will support her progression.

- 5.6. A new member of staff has joined the team to fill the vacancy for the Key Stage 4 Advisor role and has introduced a project called 'New Horizons', where pupils in Y10 and Y11 are invited to attend regular sessions to develop their self confidence and employability. Each session includes a fun/challenge session and an informal employability skills session.
- 5.7. Improving literacy is a key to helping children achieve at school and the 'Kindle Club' which was introduced over summer is proving successful. Children have been issued with a kindle with a series of age appropriate/ability appropriate books pre-loaded. Nine children have been invited to take part to support their transition from Year 6 to Year 7. From the start of August 2016 to the end of September they have read twenty three books between them. Foster carers have been amazed at how well the children have taken to the project and how engaged by it they have been. This will continue until the end of the year when the impact on their reading age will be assessed, as well as progress reports from their new schools.
- 5.8. Younger children are provided with a book parcel through the 'Letterbox Club'. To support this we submitted a bid for a free author event and have recently heard that this was successful. The exact details are yet to be confirmed but it will be an interactive event for children age 5-7 years and their carers.
- 5.9. The number of young people in care has remained stable and all are supported by an Advisor. Applications to local schools have been accepted, although in the case of one school this took longer than was expected while the school requested additional information. Other applications have been swiftly accepted by schools and suitably supported. A meeting has taken place with individual headteachers to discuss admission issues and it has agreed, where possible, to inform schools in advance when pupils are likely to be placed in an area.
- 5.10. The Virtual School Annual Report will be presented to the January Committee meeting.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC)

- 5.11. Cheshire East currently has 19 UASC; 12 cared for children and 7 care leavers. This includes six young people from Kent who have recently been

accommodated as part of the dispersal process. This number is expected to increase significantly through the national transfer scheme.

- 5.12. On October 10th there was an announcement to Parliament that the UK government would be speeding up its work with the French Government to move UASC to the UK particularly from the camps in Calais. These children will either be reunited with family in the UK or be looked after by the local authority. The Home Office is taking a central role in this work and will give local authorities 24 hours' notice to conduct checks with family members in order to facilitate reunification.
- 5.13. UASC with no reunification plans will be placed in local authorities under the national transfer scheme. The exact impact for Cheshire East is unknown at the time of writing given the exact numbers of children moving to the UK is also unknown.

Involvement of Young People in the Committee

- 5.1. Following the September meeting, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee attended the first meeting of the 'Shadow Board' of cared for children and care leavers. A discussion took place around the top 5 issues that the young people wanted to raise. These are:
 1. Life Skills
 - Budgeting
 - Cooking
 - Looking after yourself
 2. Employment and education
 - Help
 - Support getting back into education
 - Interview/CV writing skills/cover letters
 3. Transitions
 - From carer to carer
 - Health and wellbeing
 - From care to care leavers
 4. Access to support
 - More counselling – faster support
 - Big delays on waiting lists
 - Emotional health support
 5. Free bus pass
 - Post 16 education for cared for children

- 5.2. If agreed by the Committee, a group of young people would like to attend the January Committee to meet Committee Members and to discuss the above.

November Children's Right's Month

- 5.3. For the third year running Cheshire East will be celebrating November Children's Right's Month (NCRM). NCRM is where everyone working with children and young people in Cheshire East can celebrate and raise awareness of children's rights in a variety of different ways. Go to www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ncrm for the full calendar of events and more information about NCRM.

- 5.4. This year, young people have come up with the idea of a takeaway takeover menu, where adults can choose from a range of options to see what it feels like to be a young person today. Some of the options relating to cared for children and care leavers include:

- The £21 challenge – where you can experience what it feels like for a care leaver to try and purchase a weekly shop for only £21.
- A day at a children's home – a commitment to spend a day with those in children's homes, and understand the difficulties they face daily.
- Setting up home - for care leavers, setting up home is a difficult job. The challenge is to try and set up your own home, but on the budget of a care leaver.

- 5.5. One of the main celebrations in November is the 'Star Awards'. This is a celebration event and awards ceremony for cared for children and young people and care leavers in Cheshire East. The event is co-organised by young people. This year's event will take place on Saturday 20th November 2016.

Children and Young People's Improvement Plan

- 5.6. Ofsted's Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers in July 2015 identified a number of areas for improvement; a number of these were in relation to cared for children and care leavers. An improvement action plan was developed and is being regularly monitored by a number of key groups, including the Local Safeguarding Children Board and Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with overall accountability resting with the Health and Wellbeing Board.

- 5.7. A new plan to address any outstanding areas for improvement identified through the quality assurance framework is currently in development.

Elected Member Training around Corporate Parenting

- 5.8. The Committee requested that Officers develop Elected Member training around the corporate parenting responsibilities. Discussions are currently underway to develop a timetable for this training. It is proposed that officers

will deliver a number of short briefings to inform elected members about the roles and responsibilities of being a corporate parent. Attendance and effectiveness will be reported back in to the Corporate Parenting Committee for subsequent review.

Corporate Parenting Strategy – Key Priorities and Actions for 2016-17

- 5.9. The Corporate Parenting Operational Group have been reviewing the Corporate Parenting Strategy and agreeing priorities for 2016-17. The revised priorities are attached at Appendix 1.

DfE Innovation Fund – Expressions of Interest Update

- 5.10. Cheshire East Council submitted a number of expressions of interest to the DfE Children's Social Care Innovation Programme. One of these included working with Munro, Turnell and Murphy to deliver a core evidence based model of practice for social work using Signs of Safety. The bid also involves 30 other local authorities.

Corporate Parenting Performance Scorecard

- 5.11. At the last meeting of the Corporate Parenting Committee, the Corporate Parenting Operational Group were tasked to pull together a range of measures for a scorecard to enable the Committee to monitor, scrutinise and challenge performance across a range of services for cared for children and young people. Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to endorse the attached measures at Appendix 2 to form the basis of the future scorecard. The first populated scorecard will be presented to the January Committee and quarterly thereafter.

6. Wards Affected and Local Ward Members

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

7. Implications of Recommendation

7.1. Policy Implications

- 7.1.1. There are a number of policy implications as a result of local and national developments and these will be reported, as appropriate to the relevant Committee.

7.2. Legal Implications

- 7.2.1. The national and local developments described in this report are wide ranging and will in many particulars have legal implications. Legal advice will be sought, as appropriate, upon all relevant emerging issues.

7.3. Financial Implications

7.3.1. The Innovation Fund Bid will bring further funding into the Council. This is matched funded with a budget that has already been secured through transition funding.

7.4. Human Resources Implications

7.4.1. There could be some human resources implications from the children's homes recommissioning. These are being reported through other Committees.

7.5. Equality Implications

7.5.1. Cared for children and care leavers tend to have poorer outcomes when compared to their peers.

7.6. Rural Community Implications

7.6.1. None.

7.7. Public Health Implications

7.7.1. None identified at this stage.

8. Risk Management

8.1. Cared for children and care leavers are a vulnerable group that are at risk of a number of factors – poor education and training, health, safeguarding and transition into adulthood.

9. Background Papers

9.1. Appendix 1 – Corporate Parenting Strategy Priorities 2016-17

9.2. Appendix 2 - Corporate Parenting Scorecard measures

9.3. *In Care, Out of Trouble:*

<http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/In%20care%20out%20of%20trouble%20summary.pdf>

10. Contact Information

Contact details for this report are as follows:-

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