

Cheshire East Council

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 24th January 2017

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 and information at Appendix 1;
 - 2.1.2 Scrutinise the corporate parenting scorecard 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

National Assessment and Accreditation System for child and family social workers (NAAS)

- 5.1. The DfE has launched a consultation for the new National Assessment and Accreditation System for child and family social workers (NAAS). This

consultation will run for twelve weeks – 20 December 2016 until 14 March 2017.

Looked after children: mental health and emotional wellbeing – call for evidence

- 5.2. The Department of Health and the Department for Education have established an expert working group – supported by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) - to develop models of care and care pathways to support the mental health and wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers. To inform this work the group is seeking practice examples from across the spectrum of need.

Local Developments

House Project

- 5.3. Cheshire East has joined an innovation bid with Stoke to run the House Project. This involves setting up a company with children in care and care leavers to recycle derelict houses. This is intended to develop the ownership, participation the skills of these children and young people.

Budget Proposals

- 5.4. A number of budget proposals will be considered by Cabinet in February in relation to the cared for service. This includes the following proposals:
- Foster carer council tax exemption – there was 100% exemption rate until last year when it change changed to 50%. An assessment of the impact of the exemption suggested that this has not improved the recruitment or retention of foster carers. It is proposed that the exemption will be removed from March 2017. The service is currently looking at other ways to incentivise foster carers including IT equipment, access to leisure, free car parking;
 - Cheshire fostering services – Discussions have commenced with regional partners (Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington) to identify opportunities for fostering services to work together on key areas. The aim is to increase our ability to compete with private sector providers whilst also seeking efficiencies in how services are provided. The proposals being considered focus on the following key areas in the first phase.
 - Fostering recruitment – shared referral / front door services
 - Marketing – shared strategies and media work
 - Training of foster carers - access to pooled training programmes
 - Charging policy for cared for children – the service is currently looking at the feasibility of charging for children being accommodated under Section 20; the charge will be to parents of these children.

- Proposal to fund the Post-16 Adviser from pupil premium funding. There is to be further consideration in relation to additional appropriate posts within the virtual school that can also be funded legitimately from pupil premium to ensure that staffing can be maintained and funding utilised for maximum impact.
- Growth bid for cared for children - There has been a 15% increase in the numbers of cared for children in Cheshire East over the past two years. Although still below national and local comparators, admissions to care have continued to exceed discharges resulting in the need for an increase in available placements, particularly for those with more complex needs and also staff to support these children and young people.
- Growth bid for Watermill House – this proposal puts in place permanent funding to ensure that the important accommodation and support for cared for children and care leavers at Watermill House can continue.

STAR Awards

- 5.5. The annual STAR Awards took place on Saturday 20th November 2016. 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. Work will start shortly with young people to plan the awards for 2017.

Update on Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (UASC)

- 5.6. Prior to Christmas Cheshire East accommodated two 17 year old girls under the Lord Dubs amendment. They were part of a flight arriving at Manchester from France. The girls have settled very well and are making good progress. Cheshire East remains below its expected percentage of UASC, but we have been leading the way regionally in the resettlement of young people. We have received positive feedback from accommodation providers and education establishments as to the care plans provided.

Regional Adoption – “Adoption Counts”

- 5.7. Plans are progressing as expected for Cheshire East to move into the Regional Adoption Agency on 1st April. ‘Adoption Counts’ has been agreed as the name for the Regional Adoption Agency and branding is currently being prepared.

Special Educational Needs and Disability - Preparing for adulthood Policy

- 5.8. A new policy has been developed on preparing for adulthood for young people with special educational needs and disability.

Social worker Recruitment strategy

- 5.9. Cheshire East's Social Worker Recruitment Strategy '*Where Social Work Works*' received a high commendation in the Children & Young People Now Awards in November 2016.

Signs of Safety Innovation Bid

- 5.10. Cheshire East's expression of interest to the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme to implement Signs of Safety as a way of working in the borough has been approved by the DfE to move to the bid stage. Further information on Signs of Safety is attached at Appendix 1.

Corporate Parenting Performance Scorecard

- 5.11. At the November Committee Members agreed a number of measures to include in a quarterly scorecard. The first populated scorecard is attached at Appendix 2 for scrutiny.

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. The growth bid will result in increased personnel to support the additional cared for children and care leavers in the system.

7.5. Equality Implications

7.5.1. Equality impact assessments have been completed on the budget proposals listed in para 5.4.

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 – Signs of Safety Frequently Asked Questions

9.2. Appendix 2 - Corporate Parenting Scorecard

10. Contact Information

Contact details for this report are as follows:-

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