

Cheshire East Council

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 4th July 2017

Report of: Nigel Moorhouse, Director of Children's Social Care

Subject/Title: Corporate Parenting Update

Portfolio Holder: Cllr George Hayes

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.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

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

Children and Social Work Act

- 5.1. The Children and Social Work Act, which gained Royal Assent on 27 April, introduces a range of changes for local authority duties on looked-after children, local safeguarding arrangements, the regulation of children's social workers and how children and young people are taught about sex and

relationships. The following areas are of particular relevance to Corporate Parenting Committee:

5.2. **Looked after children and care leavers**

5.21 Corporate parenting principles

- A set of corporate parenting principles were introduced which local authorities must “have regard to” when carrying out their functions in relation to looked after children and care leavers.
- The principles include: acting in the best interests of the child; health promotion (physical & mental); encouraging them to express their views, wishes and feelings and taking these into account; promoting high aspirations and seeking to secure best outcomes; promoting safety and stability in home lives, relationships, education and work; preparing young people for adulthood and independent living.
- The Secretary of State has the power to develop statutory guidance on the principles.

5.22 Extending local authority support for care leavers (Local Offer for care leavers and extension of Personal Adviser)

- Under s2 all local authorities must develop a “local offer for care leavers” which outlines the services that it must provide under the Children Act 1989 and other services the local authority provides to support care leavers into independent living.
- Before publishing its local offer, which can be updated from time to time, a local authority must consult relevant persons.
- The provision of a Personal Adviser is extended from the age of 21 up to 25, as is the eligibility to have a pathway plan developed and support outlined in that plan provided (s. 3).
- Where the young person leaves care at 21, the local authority are under a duty to offer the extension of support to the care leaver as soon as possible after turning 21 and at least once every 12 months whilst under the age of 25.
- In other cases, the duty is on the care leaver to request the support to carry on, and can do this at any point whilst under the age of 25.
- Provisions to place children in secure accommodation elsewhere in Great Britain.
- Makes various amendments existing legislation to make it legal for local authorities in England and Wales to place children in secure accommodation in England and Wales and vice-a-versa (s.10)

5.3. **Safeguarding children**

5.31 Reviewing cases when there are serious safeguarding failures (replacing Serious Case Reviews)

- A new national “Child Safeguarding Review Panel” will be established. Panel members will be appointed by the Secretary of State. The panel will report annually to the Secretary of State. (s. 12)
- The role of the panel will be to review complex safeguarding failures in England or cases which are deemed to be of national importance. The panel’s role is to supervise the reviewing of the case and publish a report based on the findings, which will highlight learnings.
- Local authorities are under a duty to notify the panel if they know or suspect a child has been abused or neglected, and then that child dies or is seriously harmed, or if the child (who is usually resident in their LA) dies or is seriously harmed outside of England (s.14).

5.32 Changing local safeguarding arrangements in England by abolishing Local Safeguarding Children’s Boards and establishing Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

- S.30 abolishes LSCBs by removing the relevant sections from the Children Act 2004. In their place, s.16 of the Act requires local authorities to make new safeguarding arrangements with the core safeguarding partners (local authority, police and clinical commissioning group) and any other relevant agency the local authority deems appropriate. Local authority and safeguarding partners will work together to identify and respond to needs of children in the area.
- S.17 places a duty on the safeguarding partners (local authority, police and health) to (1) identify serious child safeguarding cases which raise issues of importance within the area, (2) review those cases where it is considered appropriate in order to identify learning. These are known as Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. The report must be presented to the national panel.
- The Secretary of State may make regulations outlining how local reviews should be undertaken.
- Under s.21, two or more local authorities and their safeguarding partners in England can agree to be treated as a single area by combining or delegating their functions.

5.33 Social work in England

- New social work regulator “Social Work England” formed.
- The overarching objectives of Social Work England are: protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and wellbeing of the public; promote and maintain public confidence in social workers in

England; and promote and maintain proper professional standards for social work in England.

- The regulator will be responsible for maintaining a register of social workers in England and will be responsible for 'fitness to practice' hearings.
- SWE will develop and consult on a set of professional standards and will also set standards of education and training of social workers.

Local Developments

Regional Adoption Agency

- 5.4. From 3 July 2017, adoption services in Cheshire East will be delivered through an integrated service called Adoption Counts. Stockport Council will act as the host agency, and will work with Cheshire East and Manchester, Trafford and Salford local authorities. By 2020, the government expects all adoption services to be delivered via regional adoption agencies.

Update on Fostering Collaboration

- 5.5. Work continues on developing sub-regional collaborative arrangements around fostering services. On 9th May 2017, Cabinet considered a report, which sought approval to progress the development of a shared fostering service for Cheshire East alongside Warrington, Halton and Cheshire West and Chester. The report also sought approval to explore the feasibility of a single local authority delivering the functions of the fostering service on behalf of the partnership.

Fostering Care Fortnight

- 5.6. Foster Carer Fortnight took place between 8th – 21st May 2017. The campaign is the UK's biggest foster carer recruitment drive, which aims to raise the profile of fostering and to show how foster care transforms lives. Cheshire East are working closely with other local areas to recruit much needed foster carers through a campaign called 'You Can Foster'.
- 5.7. Staff from the children and families service have been backing the campaign saying 'do something incredible for Foster Care Fortnight'. Our existing foster carers have also backed the campaign, telling their stories to Silk 1069 radio breakfast show.

New Head of Service, Cared for Children

- 5.8. A new Head of Service for Cared for Children has been appointed. Kerry Birtles joins the service in August.

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 There are no immediate financial implications related to the contents of this paper.

7.4. Human Resources Implications

- 7.4.1. There are no immediate human resource implications related to the contents of this paper.

7.5. Equality Implications

- 7.5.1. There are no equality implications as a result of this paper.

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. Contact Information

Contact details for this report are as follows:-

Name: Gill Betton
Designation: Head of Children's Developments & Partnerships
Tel. No.: 07764 166262
Email: gill.betton@cheshireeast.gov.uk