



Cheshire East  
**Children and Young  
People's**

**Sufficiency Statement for  
Cared for Children  
2018-19**



**Cheshire East**  
Children & Young  
People's Trust

## **Our Shared Ambition in Cheshire East is that:**

Children and Young People are **valued as individuals** in their own right

Children and Young People **feel and are safe and protected**, free from fear and danger

Children and Young People are brought up and cared for within their own families wherever possible but **experience good care** where this is not the case

Children and Young People are **physically, mentally and emotionally healthy**

Children and Young People **enjoy their childhood** and youth and have a positive experience of social engagement with each other and their communities

Children and Young People have **every opportunity to achieve** and reach their potential and enjoy their school and learning experiences

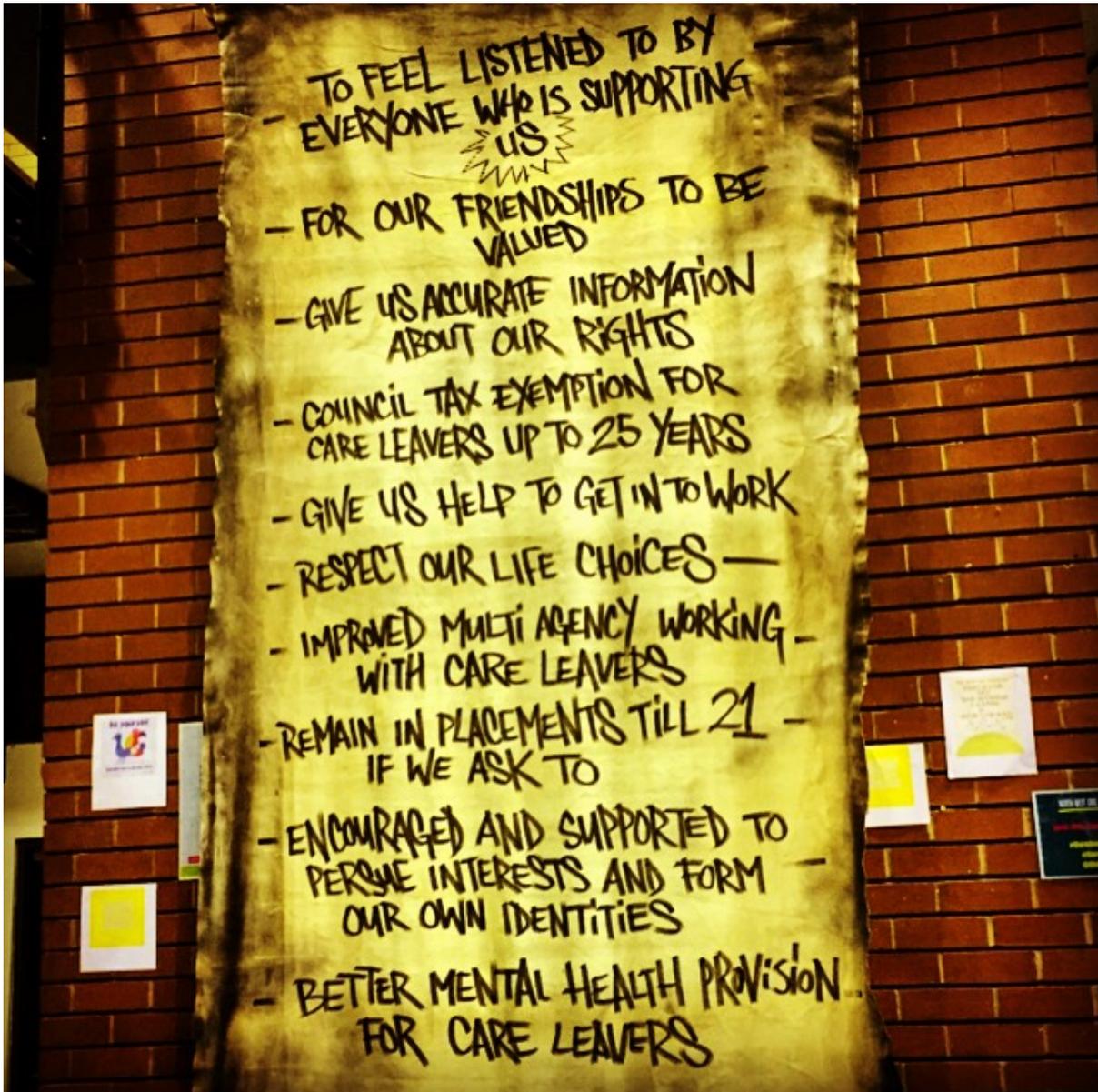
Children and Young People **have a say in the services they receive** - and **see meaningful participation as their right**

Children, young people, their families and services **work together to meet individual needs** and problem solve, and support is based on their lived experience

Young People are supported into adulthood **able to shape their own destiny**

The borough **celebrates the successes and achievements** of all children and young people

## The Care Leavers Pledge!



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## Foreword

Cheshire East Children and Young People's Plan sets out the vision for Cheshire East to be a place where children and young people thrive, are safe from harm, feel physically and emotionally healthy, have access to outstanding education and feel prepared for and excited about adulthood.

We work extremely hard to make sure this is the experience for all our children and young people. Our Early Help offer is in place to support families to stay together, however there are a number of children and young people whose families are unable to care for them; this may be because of temporary or permanent problems facing their parents, as a result of abuse or neglect or as a result of a range of difficulties including not having a parent to look after them. In these circumstances it is the Local Authority's responsibility for providing the best care and support.

In Cheshire East our children and young people have been asked to be referred to as 'cared for children' and 'care leavers'. When safe and appropriate we want our cared for children to live in Cheshire East, this may not always be possible due to safety concerns but, regardless of where a young person is placed, we want them to feel nurtured and supported to have high aspirations and achieve their best outcomes.

When a young person becomes cared for the Local Authority then has Corporate Parenting responsibilities. Corporate Parenting is the term used for the collective responsibility of the Local Authority and its partners to ensure all services i.e. housing, health, leisure are working together to support the care and protection of our children and young people.

All children are unique; children who come into care even more so with needs and circumstances each requiring an individual, tailored response. As a Corporate Parent it is our responsibility to ensure we understand what these needs are and that we have the skills, knowledge and resources to meet them.

The purpose of this Sufficiency Statement is to set out the provision we, as a local authority, have in place for cared for children, children on the edge of care or custody and care leavers. Ensuring it is flexible, diverse and most importantly is influenced by what our children and young people tell us.

## Introduction

The majority of children are brought up in their own families, but for a small number of children circumstances may dictate the need to grow up in alternative settings which can include foster care, residential and supported independent living.

Children in Care are the responsibility of the local authority who becomes their Corporate Parent. As Corporate Parents we need to ensure that a sufficient number, type and quality of accommodation is available in order to ensure the welfare and emotional and physical well-being of every child and that they are in environments with people who support them to reach their potential.

No one service or agency can by itself provide all the support needed by children in care. It requires all services and agencies to 'share the care' and actively work together to ensure the right support and opportunities are made available to children and young people in care and their carers

Local Authorities are required, under s22G of the Children Act 1989, to publish an annual Sufficiency Statement for children in care.

Cheshire East's Cared for Children and Care Leavers Corporate Parenting Strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan set out the principles by which agencies and services in Cheshire East will ensure that children in care have the same opportunities as their peers to enable them to fulfil their potential, and make a good start in adult life. It sets out the achievements so far, shared priorities for children and young people in care, and the actions to be taken to make a positive difference to their lives.

As corporate parents we have high expectations for our children and young people in care and encourage them to have high expectations of themselves. We want them to leave care with a sense of achievement and security, looking forward to a future where they will be valued and involved citizens who are economically independent and able to contribute positively to the communities in which they live.

Our Corporate Parenting Strategy details five outcomes for which we can measure progress to ensure we are all working as hard as possible to ensure children and young people feel supported, encouraged and hopeful; these outcomes are in the words of our cared for children and care leavers:

- Involve Me
- Providing me with a Good Safe Home
- Keep Me Healthy
- Help Me to Achieve
- Support Me to Move to Adult Life

Each outcome has priorities and details actions of what needs to be achieved to meet each outcome; the voice of children and young people is central to the Corporate Parenting Strategy and informs this Sufficiency Statement.

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## Executive Summary

The overall picture in Cheshire East is of good and improving performance in relation to our Children in Care. Whilst we have seen an increase in the number of cared for children during the past year we continue to be lower than both the regional and national average. We feel confident that for these cared for young people they are in the right environment that will best meet their needs; the highest driver for removing children from their family home continues to be abuse and neglect. We have seen an increase in the local child / young person population this, alongside with national drivers which have also put pressure on care numbers, and a change in culture and practice we believe contributes to the increase.

The number of children placed beyond a 20 mile radius of Cheshire East has remained consistent over the past 4 years at 17%. For those young people who are placed further away there is robust evidence provided in the placement approval request to demonstrate why that placement best meets need. There is an on-going priority to continue to place more children nearer home; with plans to expanding our internal residential offer to five properties, a continued drive to recruit and retain a diverse range of foster carers and further developing our 16 + Ignition offer; for example in 2017 we seen an increase in the number of taster flats (we now have 4) with plans to increase this further working with our local commissioned services and social landlords.

Central to our approach is the wishes and views of our young people who have quite clearly told us that what is important is being consulted on where they live and having a choice where to live when leaving care. Cheshire East has signed up to The Care Leavers Pledge and are committed, with partners, to the priorities set out in Children and Young People Plan. Ignition is evidence of our commitment to the pledge with a monthly panel attended by young people who leave with ownership of their plan for accommodation with a choice of provision that best meets their needs; for now and the future. This approach has also seen greater stability for our young people.

Cheshire East accesses four North West / Greater Manchester Frameworks providing external agency placements for residential care, fostering and leaving care. This provides greater value for money and core standards that are consistent across the region. The new DPS Framework which is being introduced in 2018 will support greater flexibility and choice which is better aligned to the needs we have identified.

Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) continue to take a high number of our cared for children. During 2017 we have worked with a small number of IFA's to develop our partnership; using their experience to test out our LEAN Review arrangements and to look at recruitment within the

Cheshire East (CE) area. In 2018 we will work with a greater number of IFA's to develop a more bespoke offer, closer working relationships and targeted recruitment as it is recognised that at times more specialist provision is required when it is unable to be met in-house.

Quality Assurance visits take place across all residential placements; this provides close scrutiny of the placement but, more importantly, the opportunity to develop relationships with our providers. Voice for Children (a Social Enterprise run by a Cheshire East care leaver utilising the lived experience of being in care) undertake the visits with us providing a genuine opportunity to capture the young person's views. In 2018 we will be rolling out Quality Assurance visits and greater scrutiny to our 16+/ Supported Accommodation providers. We will be working with the NW Region in a planned programme of Independent Fostering Agency Quality Assurance visits too.

Adoption Counts – Cheshire East's new Adoption Service joined the Regional Partnership in the Summer of 2017. The service has relocated sharing space between CE and the regional office which has allowed for greater partnership working. In 2017 foundations were put in place to support Concurrency; it is envisaged the first concurrency placement will be made in 2018.

CE's Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers Pathway Plan has developed and strengthened. Working with local providers we support young people to establish them and, when they are ready, support them to move to West Street - our independent living house. Our UAAS worker has developed best practice, good relationships with our young people, local colleges and other agencies and has provided a safe and strong environment for these young people to begin to flourish again. In 2018 we will be working to develop our offer further; housing and wider support, in line with the expected increase in numbers.

Staying Put and Staying Close allow young people to have the option and support in place to stay close to their Foster Care Placement or Residential home when they leave, or to reside with the Foster Care family past their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Staying Put has started to develop within CE which is extremely positive but this has had an impact upon the number of FC available. In 2018 we will be working with residential providers to develop Staying Close.

## The Sufficiency Duty for Children in Care

The Statutory Guidance sets out a requirement for Local Authorities to work with key partners to be in a position to secure, where reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for children in care in their local authority area which meets the needs of children and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area ('the sufficiency duty').

The sufficiency duty requires local authorities to do more than simply ensure that accommodation be 'sufficient' in terms of the number of beds provided. They must also have a regard to the benefits of securing a number of providers and a range of services. Fundamentally, the accommodation available must meet the needs of children. To achieve this Cheshire East's Children's Commissioning and Placements Team follow the commissioning cycle of analyse, plan, do, review. A wealth of data is used to inform our analysis including the quarterly Cared for Children Monitoring Reports and Placements North West census. We do not rely solely on data, the biggest contribution to our analysis is the feedback from our children and young people and our partners / professionals. The views and aspirations of our young people are instrumental to our planning, delivery and achieving outcomes.

There are **standards of excellence** set out in the 1989 Children's Act for the sufficiency duty. The following sets out what these standards are and how Cheshire East has met these or is currently working towards them.

**Standard of Excellence** - All children are placed in the local authority area, except where this is not consistent with their needs and welfare

Keeping children and young people safe is paramount; this begins with our Early Help offer. Supporting families to stay together with the help they need to maintain this. Our weekly Resource Allocation Panel (RAP) has strengthened this approach during 2017 with challenge and support given to colleagues to enable alternative solutions to coming into care or moving placement.

However for some children it is necessary for them to be placed a distance from their home setting due to safeguarding concerns or to accommodate significant levels of need. Where this is required we work closely with the host authority to ensure there are the right support and services available within that area and that there are clear strategies around Missing from Home, Child Sexual Exploitation and that it has a strong LSCB that supports local providers.

The percentage of the cared for children population accessing a placement beyond 20 miles of their previous registered address is 17%, this is consistent with the previous year. This means that less than 1 in 5 cared for children in Cheshire East is accommodated over 20 miles from their home authority. This position is not too far adrift of the general position across the North West and we would be looking to reduce this further to 10% and to better understand the rationale for those placed at distance from the authority. Analysis is consistently undertaken to understand the placement decision, presenting need and any gaps in local provision that would have supported a placement closer to the young person's home community.

**Achievements from 2017:**

- We have worked with local providers to enable much closer working; knowing in advance what vacancies are coming up and what the matching considerations will be.
- We hosted a Sexual Exploitation training event in partnership with one of our local residential homes
- We have worked with IFA's to encourage targeted recruitment within CE and have seen local recruitment growth for some of our more specialist IFA's
- We have developed strong relationships with providers who would like to work with us in Cheshire East; a provider who has been running successfully in Australia for ten years is just in the process of opening its first home in England in CE
- We have Short Breaks providers working with us to look at the opportunities for more closer working
- We have a group living house delivering 16+ supported accommodation within CE run by an external organisation; partly due to need identified via Ignition

**Plans for 2018:**

- Our Resource Allocation Panel (RAP) will follow the Signs of Safety approach which will enhance a rounded assessment and planning
- Redesign our edge of care support structures / resources
- Continue to market shape and undertake procurement activity to further develop local provision
- Put in place a Home Based Care Framework for children with a disability in order to strengthen the support at home rather than needs escalating and requiring more specialist services

**Standard of Excellence** - All children with a plan of adoption are placed with an adoptive family within 12 months of that plan being approved.

**Awaiting info from Adoption counts – Mark sending today (Thursday)**

Cheshire East is now part of a Regional Adoption Agency with Stockport MBC, Trafford MBC, Manchester MBC and Salford MBC.

Cheshire East has successfully maintained its performance since 2016 reducing the approval time from 7 months to 5 months. Of those who took longer this was due to additional matching requirements including sibling groups and further complex needs.

In 2017/2018 thirteen children have been adopted, and twenty eight have achieved permanence through Special Guardianship orders.

In 2017 recruitment was targeted to identify families who could consider children in terms of fostering to adopt and families who would be able to adopt sibling groups and older

**Achievements for 2017: xxxxxx**

**Plans for 2018: xxxxxx**

**Standard of Excellence** - There is a diverse range of universal, targeted and specialist services working together to meet children's needs, including children and young people who are already looked after as well as those at risk of becoming looked after or in custody.

Cheshire East has a wide ranging offer that is designed around evidenced need. Due to the size of the authority there is a locality approach to service delivery. Cheshire East's Consultation Service (ChECS) provides a holistic approach to advice, support and referring to appropriate services.

Our Early Help offer is delivered internally and through commissioned services and provides support at the earliest opportunity to help stop issues from escalating. This support may come from universal services, for example our Youth Engagement Service, Family Support, Early Years, Schools or from a more targeted provision such as @ct, CAMHS, Children in Need or Virtual School or Youth Offending Service. Services work together to support children and families and, where appropriate, provide a step down approach.

During 2017 the Resource Allocation Panel (RAP) was established to support colleagues with both ideas and challenge for all placement requests and placement moves; encouraging more

innovative and creative thinking. The approach used is in line with Signs of Safety. RAP encourages Social Workers to think differently but it also challenges services to think and deliver differently too.

### **The Big House!**

A family who were discussed at RAP provide a great example of the difference creative thinking and partnership working can make. A family were facing an extremely stressful situation with Granny taking over the care of her 4 grandchildren in her small house. To support Granny, Aunty moved in to help and brought her two small children too. Due to a range of difficulties there were conversations about what the safest and most supportive plan would be for this family.

Housing worked with us to help secure a bigger house. Home Start and the Family Support Service provided additional support. A Foster Carer provided mentoring and @ct helped with support to aunty and granny alongside providing a buddy for the young people. School played a big part in supporting this arrangement. Partners from a range of services have successfully kept this family together.

### **Community At It's Best!**

Our unaccompanied asylum seekers have arrived from a range of countries all with different stories, traumas and experiences. Working with the local community we are now in a position to offer these vulnerable young people a safe home. We have worked with neighbours who now provide a protective watching eye and support with simple things like putting the bins out! The college has developed its offer to provide English lessons, vocational activities and friendship support. The YMCA has a football team that has been extremely welcoming and our supported living providers; YMCA, Mococo and Watermill have all developed their offer to make sure young people are supported to live independently. Links have been made with local hairdressers, GP's, food shops as well as the Mosque; all of whom have been extremely welcoming and supportive. Our UAAS project worker and Personal Advisors have worked extremely well together to ensure this community approach continues to thrive.

### **A Different Track**

Our Youth Offending colleagues raised concerns about a young person who had recently emerged from the criminal justice system and needed extra support to get back on the right track again. Bringing together Youth Engagement, the police, the local college, YMCA alongside commissioning a new placement with floating support we were able to help this young person find work experience and begin to re-engage with college and their life again.

**Standard of Excellence** - Our Children's Trust (including housing) work together to secure a range of provision to meet the needs of those who become looked after at the age of 16 and 17, and to support the continuity of education or accommodation beyond the age of 18.

We are extremely proud of our offer for Care Leavers; by working with all partners we have choice for young people and a process that provides them with a voice and ownership of their accommodation and future plan. Ignition is for young people aged 15½ plus who are thinking about where and how they would like to live when they leave care (we think the earlier we can plan the better the experience!) Ignition is made up of a range of partners; Housing, Social Landlords, YMCA, P3, Forum Housing Supported Lodgings, Commissioning and Leaving Care, Voice for Children and private providers. Young people attend Ignition and describe their current situation and where they would like to be in the future, partners listen and then describe what they have to offer or what they could develop to meet need. Young people are able to visit different provisions so they are able to make a more informed choice, the taster flat allows young people to experience independent living for a 2 week period with floating support to assist with budgeting, household skills, food shopping, cleaning, cooking etc...young people return home with an idea of whether they are ready to live independently and support to work on areas for development.

We now have a strong offer for our care leavers including taster flats, supported independent living, supported lodgings with 'hosts', dispersed properties with the offer of floating support alongside Staying Put and Staying Close arrangements, a group living house and support / acting as guarantor for individual tenancies. All of this choice would not have been possible without the successful partnerships that have developed through Ignition.

The panel also discuss young people who have been supported to move on; this helps ensure the placement is still meeting their needs and also helps develop our learning and placement knowledge, this whole process is very important for commissioning as it helps identify any gaps to address and good practice that we can celebrate and build upon.

In December 2017 there were 22 Independent Living Placements, which is 5% of the cared for population this is an increase of 2% since April 2017. We are witnessing more placement stability and more equipped and prepared young people who are ready to take their next independent steps.

#### **Achievements from 2017:**

- Growth in the number of Ignition taster flats (currently 4 with plans for more)
- Increase in our commissioned block contract offer

- Group Living House established
- Greater stability in placements and a planned transition
- Significant improvement in Care Leavers NEET

#### **Plans for 2018:**

- NEET Panel (Based on the Ignition Model)
- Taster Flat Provision in Macclesfield, Congleton and Middlewich
- CE Quality Assurance Visits to all 16+ provision
- Independent living skills – targeted work with 15 & 16 year olds in residential and FC placements
- Increase the number of individual tenancies
- Increase the range of 16+ provision across the borough working with local residential providers

**Standard of Excellence** - Services are available in adequate quantity to respond to children and young people including predicted demand for a range of needs, and emergencies.

**Standard of Excellence** - Services are situated across the local authority area to reflect geographical distribution of need

We have a wide range of provision across Cheshire East and this provision continues to grow based upon identified need. Whilst it is recognised we do not have the full sufficiency located within the Cheshire East boundaries we can evidence a large development of provision during 2017.

Cheshire East Foster Care recruitment continues to prove successful, as of December 2017 we have 124 Mainstream Foster Carers and 36 Family and Friend Placements.

We increased the provision of our internal residential provision from 3 homes to 5 homes, whilst challenges were presented by the commissioned provider making this a successful contract we have robust plans in place to ensure success in 2018.

Our 16+ care leavers offer has grown incredibly in particular with our block contract arrangements. Not only do these contracts provide young people with a greater choice it also provides excellent value for money and less reliance on the external market.

During 2017 we have increased provision in line with identified need and growth forecasting.

For the YMCA in Crewe we have increased by:

- 2 PACE beds that we also offer out to neighbouring authorities
- The Bridges – which provides emergency beds for up to a week whilst alternative accommodation is found
- The Foyer – offering long term accommodation in self-contained flats
- Ignition Flats – providing taster opportunities and 6 month lets
- Floating Support

For Watermill House in Macclesfield we have:

- Increased the beds to 6
- Commissioned an E-bed – providing emergency provision in the Macclesfield area
- Started discussion about developing a taster flat

For Forum Housing's Supported Lodgings Hosts we have:

- Developed the offer to allow placements for some of our more complex young people

Working with external providers we have helped shape the offer within Cheshire East by developing partnerships and encouraging establishment and growth in the areas in which we need more.

We have:

- A Group Living Unit in Crewe
- A new residential provider setting up its first home in England in Cheshire East
- A newly established home within Cheshire East working with Commissioning to expand and develop their offer
- A step down Foster Care offer from a residential school setting

For our Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers (UAAS) we have leased a 5 bedrooomed property (designed for 16+ care and accommodation) and developed a UAAS support role. We now have a very clear pathway for when UAAS young people arrive in Cheshire East. Working closely with one of our supported living providers we ensure a smooth transition; being supported with college, health and recreational plans and, when ready, being moved to live more independently in the leased property. This has worked extremely well; we have fostered positive community relations, strong links with the college and, most importantly, ensured a safe space for these vulnerable young people to flourish. Work is now underway to develop this model across the

borough working with other partners to ensure we have enough provision and are sharing good practice.

Complimenting all of this growth is access to the Frameworks through Placements North West; Greater Manchester Residential Framework, Merseyside and Partners Residential Framework, North West Fostering Framework and Leaving Care Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) Framework.

In line with the commissioning cycle these developments have all been designed following analysis of data, feedback and good practice i.e. the Taster Flats.

The data informs us that during 2017 there continued to be an increase in the number of children subject to a child protection care plan. Further analysis highlight the increasing complexity of levels of need; family dynamics and generational challenges.

The number of children in need over the 4 year period of 2014-2017 has steadily reduced. We know that targeting resources and providing the right support to families at an earlier point can help families to deescalate problems. The decrease in children in need and increase in child protection assures us that we are supporting families at an earlier point which is positive, yet dealing with more complex needs which has implications for the level of need for the young people who are coming into care.

During 2017 changes were made in services, a dedicated disability team was established so a lot of cases that were CIN in the teams were moved over to the specialist disability team. The table below shows the changes and the impact at a particular point of time. (Please note the disability figures are extracted from a specific data point so it is important not to let this factor into a like for like comparison between 2016 and 2017, although there is clearly a decrease).

**Table 1. Children in Need and Child Protection Plan Data**

		Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
CIN							
2016		1133	1129	1114	1054	995	966
2017		895	956	864	831	791	809
	<i>Disability team 2017</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>118</i>	<i>107</i>
CP							
2016		268	284	287	281	295	279
2017		288	302	336	333	369	362

As at December 2017 there were 470 children and young people who are cared for with around 9% placed in residential children's homes. Whilst this is an increase from the previous year it is evidence of the targeted work to ensure each young person is in a placement that best meets their needs. RAP ensures all placements have support and challenge to ensure the placement is working to meet the desired outcome – be that returning home or 'stepping down' to foster care provision, part of RAP's Terms of Reference is to review existing placements.

We continue to see an increase in young people aged 11 to 15 who are entering care along with the increase of UAAS. It has also become more difficult to find placements for this age group both locally and regionally.

When analysing the current cared for children population and their home town prior to coming into care 67% of cared for children come from the Crewe and Macclesfield areas. This geographical mapping of the communities from which our cared for children originate has, influenced the early help strategy and the spread of accommodation that is required; be that through the residential redesign, additional supported living properties or foster carers.

It is recognised that our local providers, both Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) and Residential, accommodate a large proportion of young people from other local authorities, which when we consider we have only 37 residential beds and are down on IFA's from 121 (2011) to 86 (2016) is quite a challenge. We have been working with providers to target recruitment within CE and to have greater contact / communication to ensure first choice on local provision.

Internally we have achieved much during 2017 with Cheshire East Foster Carers. The number of Cheshire East Family and Friends placements continues to increase. In December 2017 there were 71 placements, which is 15% of the cared for population this is an increase of 2% since April 2017 and compares favourably to the national average which stands at 8.0%.

We recruited a further three foster carer households in December 2017 the total number of mainstream foster carers is 124 looking after 157 children\* (\*as at December 2017).

#### **Achievements from 2017:**

- Increase in commissioned services to meet need
- Forged relationships with new and existing providers
- Worked more closely with other Local Authorities across the region
- Increased our Fostering Capacity Scheme loans and grants
- Promotion of simpler payments scheme and guaranteed retainers for newly approved carers awaiting matching

- Reduction in assessment time to between 16-18 weeks and further collaboration with our North West partners to consolidate the reduction in assessment time across NW and increase the numbers of inquiries translated into approvals
- Comprehensive training and development for foster carers –from pre- approval through to specialist skill development for particular placement needs
- Development of our Fostering Plus Scheme to attract foster carers who can be supported to develop specialist skills.

#### **Plans for 2018:**

- Increase the number of Foster Carers who can provide short break provision for children with disabilities
- Increase the number of placements for parent and child
- Increase the number of Foster Carers for our teenage age group and siblings
- Re-commission residential provision
- Increase the emergency provision offer
- Develop a step down Foster Care provision

**Standard of Excellence** - In addition to meeting relevant National Minimum Standards, services are of a quality to secure the specific outcomes identified in the care planning process for children and young people

Once a placement search is undertaken any offers that the Placement Service receives are forwarded to the young person's social worker and social worker's manager. Attached to the offer will be information containing the Residential Home's Statement of Purpose, latest OFSTED inspection, Reg 44 and Young Person's Handbook. The provider will also provide the names of any other Local Authority whose children may be placed in that provision so references can be sought and any matching considerations further checked out.

Where possible the Commissioning Team and the Social Worker should visit any new placements together prior to the young person visiting. A lot of effort is put into establishing the quality of the provision, ensuring the staff and manager of the home have the right skills and approach and, most importantly, have a warm, kind and inviting home.

Young people, wherever possible, visit the placement to see if it is somewhere they would like to live and can buy into. It is important for young people to feel in control of their future and feel they have a say in the plan.

Residential settings and IFA's provide regular updates on how the placement is going. Residential homes also send their monthly Reg 44 reports. The greater the relationship is with providers the more we can support placements by facilitating ongoing dialogue.

For residential placements we have a commitment to make at least one QA visit a year. This is undertaken with Voice for Children (a Social Enterprise run by a Cheshire East care leaver utilising the lived experience of being in care) which helps us to make sure the visit and review is very much young person focused. The framework for quality assurance visits has been reviewed to ensure that its coverage is rigorous and joined up with the collaborative approach being led by Placements North West. Since January 2015 QA visits have been undertaken in partnership with Voice for Children and commissioning. These joint visits have proved highly effective in ensuring the voice and eyes of the young person are central to the visit.

Prior to the QA visit information is collated from family, social workers, IRO, Virtual School and any other professionals who are linked to the young person to understand what is going well, concerns or any issues. This information is shared with the provider. Likewise feedback is gathered from the provider and fed back to CE. During 2017 a high number of compliments were received during visits about the standard of paperwork provided, the commitment of social workers and the positive communication.

Information about Ofsted inspections is collated monthly and uploaded to Liquid Logic, any changes ratings results in a visit to understand the reasons for the change and what plans are in place to address any issues raised.

IPA's have been amended on Liquid Logic so they are aligned with the outcomes detailed in the placement request form. This means IPA's will be with the provider before the placement commences, ensuring everyone is clear about the outcomes required, timescales and costs.

During 2017 a LEAN Review was undertaken of the placement process and a number of changes have now been implemented which has seen a number of changes that have provided a big impact. The 10am Huddle, as part of the Visual Management, ensures clarity about placement searches, information and updates are shared on a daily basis and more teams are working together, a cut off time for referrals and a Tuesday afternoon shut down have all contributed to a more calm and manageable system.

In a 6 month period we have seen emergency placements reduce by approximately 30%. 183 Emergency placements were sourced for the whole of 2016/2017 and 66 for a 6 month period (June to November 2017) so if projected for a year would see 132 placements. For 2016 /2017 25 were recorded as being an emergency coming from IFA's and 29 from CEC Foster Carers – for the 6 month period 2 for IFA's and 7 for CEC.

The LEAN Review looked at the Placement Request Form and working alongside Signs of Safety we were able to make this form more young person and strength focused. All of the work undertaken has resulted in more measured, clear and timely placement requests which has helped with placement searches and provided a choice.

As of December 2017 there were 196 Care Leavers. Work continues to ensure a smooth transition be that to home or moving onto adult services. A major area for development is the transition for young people from children's to adult services in relation to mental health.

#### **Achievements from 2017**

- Successful Joint Provider Forums with CWaC, Halton and Warrington
- LEAN review for placements

#### **Plans for 2018**

- Increase the number of pre-placement visits
- Develop the use of Reg 44 reports
- Report Quality Assurance themes to Social Care Leadership Team
- Develop 16+ Quality Assurance
- Launch the electronic Individual Placement Agreement (IPA)
- Drop in / unannounced visits by Commissioners
- Yearly IPA reviews for all long term placements

**Standard of Excellence** - Universal services know when a child or young person is looked after and have good links with the range of targeted and specialist services which support them, including placement providers.

**Standard of Excellence:** Placement providers (including private, voluntary and public sector providers) are linked into the wider network of services and work with these services to offer appropriate support to deliver identified outcomes for looked after children.

When a young person enters care the placement details are entered into Liquid Logic and an automated notification is sent to our colleagues in Safeguarding, Health and Virtual School. Case notes are continually updated so information sharing is in place; each team is responsible for sharing information with the relevant services as appropriate.

Our residential providers are proactive in linking with other services in their local area. This requirement is set out in the IPA and is checked as part of the QA visit.

Sometimes young people do not want people to know they are cared for and we must always be fully respectful of that whilst keeping them safe.

Locally we hold Provider Forums for all placement providers and facilitate a varied agenda that provides a range of updates; we invite speakers, share good practice from across the region and try to link services up.

Linking everything together is Children's Commissioning. The Commissioning Team works across the whole of children's services and have excellent links covering Early Help, SEN, Young Carers, Social Care and Adults Services.

**Standard of Excellence** - There are mechanisms in place to ensure that professionals involved in placement decisions have sufficient knowledge and information about the supply and quality of placements and availability of all specialist, targeted and universal support services within the local authority area.

During 2017 a LEAN Review was undertaken to look at the placement process. A number of recommendations have been implemented which have proved highly effective and produced successful outcomes.

The Visual Management recommendation introduced 'The Huddle'. At 10am every morning teams gather around the huge white board to discuss placement searches, where they are up to, any blockages, ideas, solutions.....this practice has improved partnership working, has speeded up placement finding and has helped future planning as we have a board that also records internal Foster Care provision and respite requests. Social Workers can call in and contribute ideas and keep up to date with where the search is up to. Commissioning are able to share intelligence about specific homes and areas and there is a wealth of knowledge about IFA carers alongside our internal FC.

The Placement team and Commissioning team have recently merged, being co-located with frontline social work teams ensures strong knowledge re supply of placements (via internal provision, commissioned services, 4 frameworks, off contract providers, market shaping etc) and strong evidence of quality prior to placements and QA pre and post placements is shared effectively.

RAP, Ignition and NEET Panel all provide young people and colleagues with knowledge about the local offer and support available. Ensuring placements are reviewed in a timely manner enables knowledge sharing about what is available in Cheshire East and the benefits of working more closely with local support.

Links with North West Commissioners enable good practice to be shared as we continually strive to do and be better.

**Achievements from 2017:**

- LEAN Review
- Placements and Commissioning Merging
- RAP aligning with Signs of Safety

**Plans for 2018**

- Increase in the number of joint visits with Commissioning and Social Workers to placements prior to placement offers
- Develop greater links between Early Help and Placement Providers within Cheshire East
- Develop partnerships and links local providers

**Standard of Excellence** - The local authority and the Children's Partnership collaborate with neighbouring Children's Trusts to plan the market for children in care and commission in regional or sub-regional arrangements.

Cheshire East have strong partnerships in place with all neighbouring authorities and this has developed further during 2017.

Adoption Counts is a new, collaborative adoption agency, bringing the professional expertise and specialist skills of five local authorities from across Greater Manchester and Cheshire together to deliver adoption services of the highest quality

Foster Care Collaboration will provide a number of opportunities across the region, we are already sharing resources and working on a targeted recruitment drive.

We hold joint Provider Forums with Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington which has proved extremely valuable and promoted more joint working and problem solving. The ability to discuss issues on a footprint that aligns to that of Cheshire Police also brings its benefits.

Alongside other NW local authorities we fund a small but highly effective Placements North West team. We benefit from the co-ordination of a range of framework contracts, sharing good practice from others; IFA Quality Assurance pilots, training and procurement. Placements NW also produce regular scorecard information and an annual census across the range of placement activity which provides valuable intelligence and benchmarking.

- To explore further opportunities to collaborate with neighbouring authorities in order to manage the market for residential care and Leaving Care more effectively

## What have our children and young people told us?

Be honest with us!



Be our lifelong champion!



We want to stay living in our communities



Do not judge or patronise us!



When we leave care we want a choice of where we live

We want to be consulted on where we live

We want to see health professionals (particularly mental health) at a venue of our choosing

Support us in our hobbies and interest



## In Conclusion

In many respects, the sufficiency duty is being met and considerable improvements have been made over the last 12 months to the whole system that works to deliver excellent outcomes for our children in care through good quality / value for money placements that are close to home, however, as detailed plans are in place to further improve the position and increase the range of provision within Cheshire East.

It is important that the actions identified in this Sufficiency Statement are monitored on a quarterly basis to ensure the improvement journey continues and the changes to the number / profile of children in care and the internal / external accommodation market provide appropriate influence on future actions.

The key to performance in this area is ensuring the levels and quality of accommodation for children in care across the market is maximised. The right placement at the start and the stability for children is the key to performance against the sufficiency duty. All our actions should focus on high quality outcomes for our cared for children, their voice should be loud and influence the way we work towards good quality, stable placements that are value for money.

Decision making should reflect the importance of effective early help for children and families and this continuing across the whole life course. Continuous reflection and effective decision making that is sustainable across the lifetime will provide excellent outcomes for our children in care.

## Proposed Actions

This action plan will be updated and added to on a quarterly basis.

<b>Standard of Excellence:</b> All children are placed in the local authority area, except where this is not consistent with their needs and welfare.		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Update</b>
Develop Resource Allocation Panel (RAP) Signs of Safety approach		
Redesign our edge of care support structures / resources		
Continue to market shape and undertake procurement activity to further develop local provision		
Put in place a Home Based Care Framework for children with a disability in order to strengthen the support at home rather than needs escalating and requiring more specialist services		
<b>Standard of Excellence:</b> All children with a plan of adoption are placed with an adoptive family within 12 months of that plan being approved.		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Update</b>
Awaiting Mark's feedback from Adoption Counts		
<b>Standard of Excellence:</b> There is a diverse range of universal, targeted and specialist services working together to meet children's needs, including children and young people who are already looked after as well as those at risk of becoming looked after or in custody.		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Update</b>
<b>Standard of Excellence:</b> Our Children's Trust (including housing) work together to secure a range of provision to meet the needs of those who become looked after at the age of 16 and		

17, and to support the continuity of education or accommodation beyond the age of 18.

Action	Timeframe	Update
NEET Panel (Based on the Ignition Model)		
Develop the Taster Flat Provision across Macclesfield, Congleton and Middlewich		
CE Quality Assurance Visits to all 16+ provision		
Independent living skills – targeted work with 15 & 16 year olds in residential and FC placements		
Increase the number of individual tenancies		
Increase the range of 16+ provision across the borough working with local residential providers		

**Standard of Excellence:** Services are available in adequate quantity to respond to children and young people including predicted demand for a range of needs, and emergencies.

**Standard of Excellence:** Services are situated across the local authority area to reflect geographical distribution of need

Action	Timeframe	Update
Increase the number of Foster Carers who can provide short break provision for children with disabilities		
Increase the number of Foster Carers for our teenage age group		
Re-commission residential provision		
Increase the emergency provision offer		
Develop a step down Foster Care provision		

**Standard of Excellence:** In addition to meeting relevant National Minimum Standards, services are of a quality to secure the specific outcomes identified in the care planning process for children and young people.

Action	Timeframe	Update
Increase the number of pre-placement visits		
Develop the use of Reg 44 reports		
Report Quality Assurance themes to Social Care Leadership Team		
Develop 16+ Quality Assurance		
Launch the electronic Individual		

Placement Agreement (IPA)		
Drop in / unannounced visits by Commissioners		
Yearly IPA reviews for all long term placements		
<p><b>Standard of Excellence:</b> Universal services know when a child or young person is looked after and have good links with the range of targeted and specialist services which support them, including placement providers.</p> <p><b>Standard of Excellence:</b> Placement providers (including private, voluntary and public sector providers) are linked into the wider network of services and work with these services to offer appropriate support to deliver identified outcomes for looked after children.</p>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Update</b>
<p><b>Standard of Excellence:</b> There are mechanisms in place to ensure that professionals involved in placement decisions have sufficient knowledge and information about the supply and quality of placements and availability of all specialist, targeted and universal support services within the local authority area.</p>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Update</b>
Increase in the number of joint visits with Commissioning and Social Workers to placements prior to placement offers		
Develop greater links between Early Help and Providers within Cheshire East		
Develop partnerships and links local providers		
<p><b>Standard of Excellence:</b> The local authority and the Children's Partnership collaborate with neighbouring Children's Trusts to plan the market for children in care and commission in regional or sub-regional arrangements.</p>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Update</b>
To explore further opportunities to collaborate with neighbouring authorities in order to manage the market for residential care and Leaving Care more effectively		

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCORECARD FOR CARED FOR CHILDREN'S ACCOMMODATION**

Key performance measures to supplement those included in service scorecards:

		2018-2019		
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		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Target	Comment
1	Actions in published sufficiency statement reviewed					Qtly review	
2	% of cared for children accommodated beyond 20 miles					10%	
3	% of cared for children in external agency placements that are rated good or outstanding					100%	
4	Number of cared for children in external agency placements rated inadequate					0	
5	Average weekly cost of external agency placements:  Residential  IFA					£3200  £760	
7	% occupancy level for commissioned residential					95%	
8	Contracts in place for external agency placements					100%	
9	Individual Placement Agreements for external agency placements which provide bespoke outcomes for cared for children					100%	
10	At least one compliance visit undertaken pa for each cared for child in an external agency placement					100%	