

## **Corporate Parenting Committee**

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**Date of Meeting:** 03 July 2018

**Report Title:** Corporate Parenting Update

**Portfolio Holder:** Jos Saunders Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

**Senior Officer:** Kerry Birtles, Head of Cared for Children & Care Leavers

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### **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/s**

- 2.1. Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to:
- 2.1.1. Note the contents of the report.
  - 2.1.2. Comment on the proposed governance arrangements for the new corporate parenting strategy at Appendix 1
  - 2.1.3. Nominate a representative for the new corporate parenting strategy group 'Being a Good Corporate Parent' (para 5.6)
  - 2.1.4. Identify a rep from CPC to attend the young peoples conference on 6th August (para 5.9)
  - 2.1.5. Note the provisional date for the Star Celebrations day (para 5.10)
  - 2.1.6. Endorse the proposed use of pen profiles as set out at (para 5.18)
  - 2.1.7. Identify a member of the Committee to become a 'Signs of Safety Champion' and attend the half day training (para 5.19)

### **3. Reasons for Recommendation/s**

- 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

#### Care Crisis Review

- 5.1. Applications for care proceedings in England and Wales reached record levels in 2017. This is one factor contributing to the rise in the number of children looked after in the care system, now at the highest level since 1985.
- 5.2. Family Rights Group have facilitated a seven month sector-led Review into the care crisis. The Review is supported by stakeholders within the child welfare and family justice system. The Review aimed to:
  - to examine the reasons for the rise in care proceedings and number of children in care
  - to at all times retain a focus on achieving the best outcomes for children and families
  - to take account of the current national economic, financial, legal and policy context that impacts on families and on local authority and court practice
  - to identify specific changes to local authority and court systems and national and local policies and practices that will help safely stem the increase in the number of care cases coming before the family courts and the number of children in the care system.
- 5.3. The final report has now been published has found that there are many overlapping factors contributing to the rise in care proceedings and number of children in care. This complex picture means that there is no single solution. The review sets out 20 options for change. These include immediate steps that could be taken to move away from an undue focus on processes and performance indicators, to one where practitioners are able to stay focused on securing the right outcomes for each child. The full review is available at: [https://frg.org.uk/images/Care\\_Crisis/CCR-FINAL.pdf](https://frg.org.uk/images/Care_Crisis/CCR-FINAL.pdf)

#### Changes to apprenticeships funding

- 5.4. Care leavers can experience a range of extra barriers to making the transition to the world of work. Apprenticeships are one option to help them overcome these barriers. The government is introducing a £1,000 bursary payment to support care leavers aged 16-24 starting an apprenticeship. This will begin from 1 August 2018.

## **Local Developments**

### **Corporate Parenting Strategy Developments**

- 5.5. Work continues to develop the priorities and content of the new corporate parenting strategy. The proposed governance to support implementation of the new strategy is attached at Appendix 1.
- 5.6. One of the key priorities is 'Being a Good Corporate Parent'. This includes developing, implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of the corporate parenting strategy, improving participation with children and young people and strengthening the corporate parent role with elected members, staff and partner agencies. A member of the Committee is asked to contribute to this group, which will meet quarterly.

### **Developing the Local Offer**

- 5.7. Section 1 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 requires local authorities to have regard to seven corporate parenting principles when discharging their functions in relation to cared for children and care leavers. The local offer should set out what support all local authority departments will provide (not just Children's Services), having regard to the corporate parenting principles. The local offer should include details of the services and support that may assist care leavers in, or moving to, adulthood and independent living that the local authority provides in relation to:
- Health and wellbeing
  - Relationships
  - Education and training
  - Employment
  - Accommodation
  - Participation in society
- 5.8. A Local Offer event for officers from across the Council is planned for 12th July. The purpose of this event is to raise awareness and to increase the offer available for care for children and care leavers in Cheshire East. Attendees will be invited to make a 'pledge' of what their service can offer.

### **Children and Young People's Conference**

- 5.9. The Children and Young People's Plan, the overarching plan for children's services partnerships is currently being reviewed and new priorities planned. Currently this includes a proposal to add a priority around being a good corporate parent to strengthen the partnership responsibility around corporate parenting and align to the corporate parenting strategy. A young people's conference is planned for 6<sup>th</sup> August, where they will help us to co-produce

the new plan. This will include cared for children and care leavers. A representative from the Committee is welcome to attend this conference.

#### Planning for Star Celebrations

- 5.10. Planning is now underway to plan the Star Celebrations (previously Star Awards) to recognise the achievements of all our cared for children and care leavers. This will be co-produced with young people. The event is provisionally booked for Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> November at Wychwood Park, Weston, Crewe. Members are asked to note this date.

#### New Tender for Children's Residential Care

- 5.11. Cheshire East aims to provide a more flexible range of children homes and to increase the capacity to care for more of our children within the borough. A contract was awarded to BetterCare Keys, a national children home provider, to run from 1 April 2017. However, the provider has had significant challenges in mobilising the service due to recruitment issues and the service will be re-commissioned in 2018-19. Plans are underway to re-tender; market testing has been completed and the tender is due to go out at the start of July.

#### Fostering Collaboration Update

- 5.12. Cheshire East entered into a fostering collaboration with Cheshire West, Halton and Warrington and the hub went live on the 2nd April 2018. The Hub consists of a marketing and recruitment lead and 3 full time Family Support Workers who recruit and begin the initial assessment of potential new foster carers. The emphasis within the collaboration is to optimise on the potential for new foster carers in the area covering all 4 authorities and potentially recruit experienced carers from independent fostering agencies. The interest of potential foster carers since the launch in April has been significantly higher than when we approached this individually. At one of our recent fostering open evening there were 12 potential new applicants, which is a first for Cheshire East. There were also great rewards for our children and existing foster carers, who were able to attend the Geronimo Festival at Arley Hall for free, because of a focus from the collaboration. The Board meets on a monthly basis and is striving to explore the next steps and future benefits of working together.

#### Re-tender for Advocacy and Independent Visitor Services

- 5.13. Advocacy and Independent Visitor services are currently commissioned to The Children's Society. This tender is due for renewal from December 2018, so plans are in place towards achieving a new service from December 2018. This will include looking at innovative/different ways to deliver these services. This includes increasing the number and availability of Independent Visitors. Members are asked to consider ways in which they can increase the number of Independent Visitors in Cheshire East.

#### SEND Written Statement of Action

- 5.14. Following publication of the special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) Inspection report of the local area in May 2018, the Council and the two Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are expected to submit a written statement of action (WSOA) on how we will address the following areas for improvement:
- the timeliness, process and quality of education, health and care plans
  - the lack of an effective pathway for children and young people with autism and unreasonable waiting times.
- 5.15. Consultation is currently underway on a draft WSoA before this is signed off by the Health and Wellbeing Board in July.

#### Corporate Parent Pen Pictures

- 5.16. Elected member and officers throughout Cheshire East have been providing details about themselves in the form of a 'pen picture' over the past few months. Our children and young people have spoken with enthusiasm about the benefits of knowing who their corporate parents are and a little about them. Colleagues within the Participation Service have spoken about what we are doing in Cheshire East to other areas and they are keen to adopt a similar approach in their own authorities. This tells us that this approach is useful to children and young people and in shaping the service.
- 5.17. The feedback from Members at last committee in relation to how officers intended to use the pen pictures with our young people, raised concerns about the visibility or potential misuse. The Corporate Parenting Operational Group have reflected upon the feedback from members and recognise that the sharing of personal information can be a challenge. However, on balance, and in consideration of the fact that we as the local authority know all that there is to know about our young people, it is felt that the pen pictures need to continue on their journey in sharing with our young people who their corporate Parents are.
- 5.18. We propose to invite members of the Corporate Parenting Committee to review the content of their pen pictures to ensure that they are happy with the information they are sharing before we add these to the Facebook page for our care leavers and as part of the information we provide to cared for children when they enter care.

#### Signs of Safety Training

- 5.19. Further dates for Signs of Safety Training have now been rolled out. The flyer is set out at Appendix 2 for information. The Committee is asked to identify a member of the Committee to become a 'Signs of Safety Champion' and attend the half day training in September.

## **6. Implications of the Recommendations**

### **6.1. Legal Implications**

Legal advice will be sought, as appropriate, upon all relevant emerging issues.

### **6.2. Finance Implications**

There are no direct financial implications of this report.

### **6.3. Equality Implications**

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

### **6.4. Human Resources Implications**

There are no direct financial implications of this report

### **6.5. Risk Management Implications**

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.

### **6.6. Rural Communities Implications**

None.

### **6.7. Implications for Children & Young People**

- 6.7.1. The contents of this report have implications for cared for children and care leavers, who are some of Cheshire East's most vulnerable children.

### **6.8. Public Health Implications**

- 6.8.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

## **7. Ward Members Affected**

- 7.1. 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.

## **8. Consultation & Engagement**

- 8.1. None.

## **9. Access to Information**

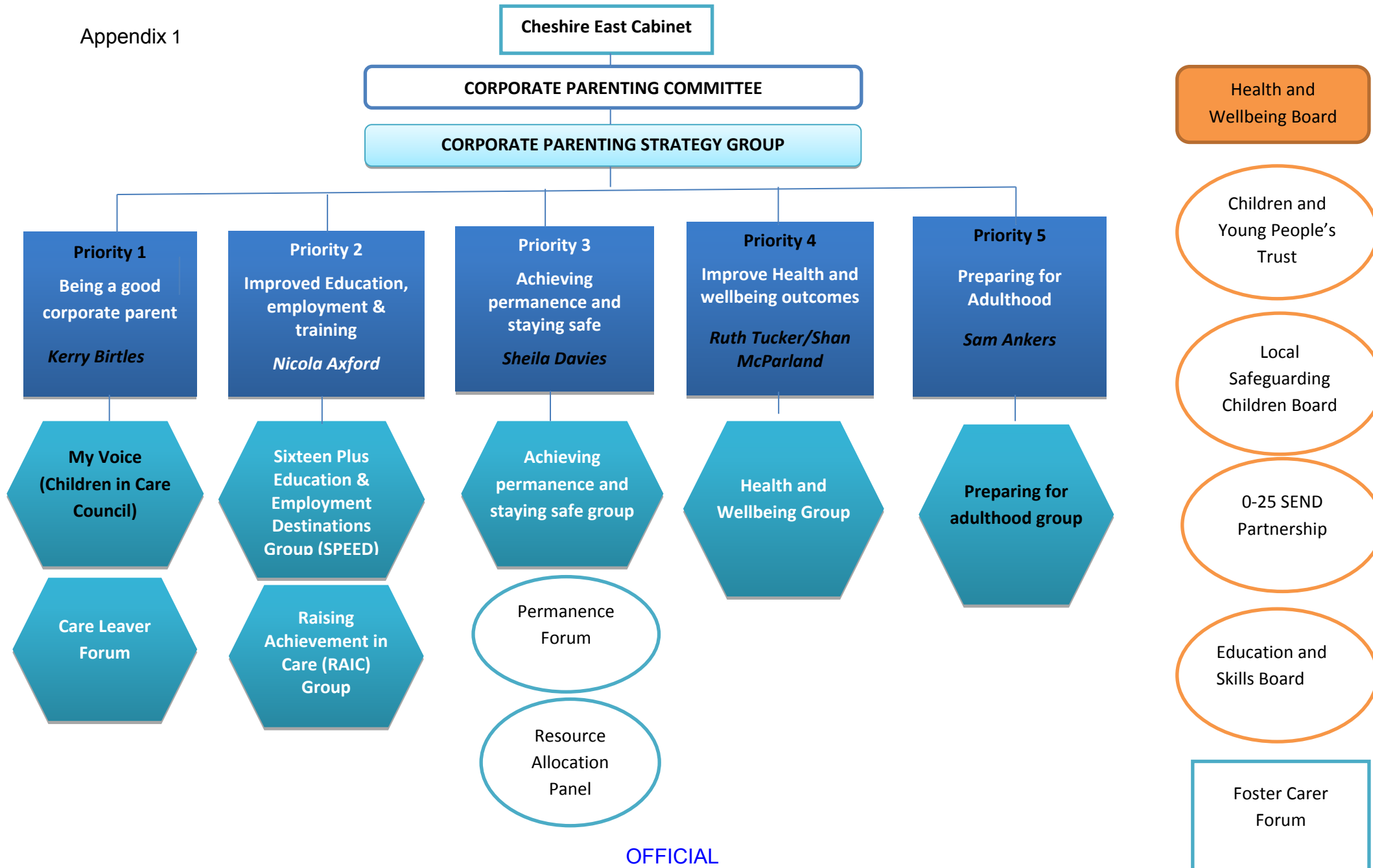
- 9.1. None.

## 10. Contact Information

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

Name: Kerry Birtles  
Job Title: Head of Cared for Children & Care Leavers  
Email: [kerry.birtles@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:kerry.birtles@cheshireeast.gov.uk)

Appendix 1







## Signs of Safety Training Dates

The three different options for Signs of Safety training, dates and how to book are included below.

### 2 Day Training

**Who is it aimed at?** Practitioners who work directly with families, and their line managers

**What does it cover?** What Signs of Safety is, how to use it in practice, and tools for working together with children, young people and families. The two day covers similar content to the half day but goes into more detail on using the practice and includes practising applying the approach to live cases.

#### Dates:

- **27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> June**, 9.30-4.30, Crewe
- **16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> July**, 9.30-4.30, Crewe
- **24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> July**, 9.30-4.30, Wilmslow
- **13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> August**, 9.30-4.30, Crewe
- **12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> September**, 9.30-4.30, Crewe
- **19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> September**, 9.30-4.30, Macclesfield
- **27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> September**, 9.30-4.30, Macclesfield
- **4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> October**, 9.30-4.30, Macclesfield
- **16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> October**, 9.30-4.30, Wilmslow
- **12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> November**, 9.30-4.30, Macclesfield
- **19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> November**, 9.30-4.30, Wilmslow
- **28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> November**, 9.30-4.30, Macclesfield
- **4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> December**, 9.30-4.30, Wilmslow
- **12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> December**, 9.30-4.30, Macclesfield

**To book your place:** please complete this booking form

[https://form.cheshireeast.gov.uk/service/LSCB\\_Training\\_Booking\\_2018\\_19](https://form.cheshireeast.gov.uk/service/LSCB_Training_Booking_2018_19)

Any queries please contact [LSCBTrainingAdministrator@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:LSCBTrainingAdministrator@cheshireeast.gov.uk)

## Half Day Training

**Who is it aimed at?** Anyone who works with families and needs to know about Signs of Safety and what it involves.

**What does it cover?** What Signs of Safety is, how to use it in practice, and tools for working together with children, young people and families. The half day course is a concise version of the 2 day course.

**Dates:**

- **21<sup>st</sup> September**, 9.30-1.00, Westfields Sandbach
- **25<sup>th</sup> September**, 9.30-1.00, Macclesfield Old Town Hall

**To book your place:** Please email [SignsofSafety@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:SignsofSafety@cheshireeast.gov.uk) with the date you would like to book onto.

Any queries please contact the email address above or contact Rebekka Wilson at 01270 685962.

## E-learning

**Who is it aimed at?** Anyone who needs to know about Signs of Safety and what it involves.

**What does it cover?** An introduction to Signs of Safety; what it is, what the approach involves, and the key tools.

**To access the e-learning please click the links below:**

For partners including schools:

<http://cheshireeast.learningpool.com/totara/dashboard/index.php?id=5>

For Cheshire East Council staff:

<http://cheshireeast.learningpool.com/course/view.php?id=388>

## Want to know more?

For more information on Signs of Safety please see our [LSCB website](#) and the official Signs of Safety website [www.SignsofSafety.net](http://www.SignsofSafety.net)

## Contact us at:

[SignsofSafety@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:SignsofSafety@cheshireeast.gov.uk)