

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 19 March 2019

Report Title: Corporate Parenting Update

Portfolio Holder: Jos Saunders Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

Senior Officer: Keith Martin, Head of Cared for Children & Care Leavers

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.

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

- 5.1. This update report aligns with the priorities of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

6. Update on Impact of the Children and Families Act 2017

- 6.1. The duties contained within the Children and Families Act 2017 continue to be embedded within services across the Peoples Directorate. The Act itself is made up of three parts, which relate to Children, Social Workers in England and general changes to existing pieces of legislation. There are 64 Sections

to the Act, which are contained within 4 Chapters. Chapter 1 introduces 11 sections that have a specific impact for cared for children and care leavers.

- 6.2. Section 1 relates to the principles of corporate parenting which we have met through the Full Council commitment to our 'Pledges' for cared for children and care leavers.
- 6.3. Sections 2 and 3 require us to publish a 'local offer' of support to care leavers, which we have done and to appoint Personal Advisors to care leavers up to the age of 25 when this is requested, which we are also doing. To date we have 14 care leavers between the age of 21 and 25 with Personal Advisors allocated and a total of 37 who have received this support over the past 12 months.
- 6.4. Section 4 requires us to provide advice and information concerning cared for children and care leavers to parents and designated teachers in maintained schools and academies, which we are doing through our Virtual School.
- 6.5. Sections 5, 6 and 7 place duties on governing bodies of maintained schools, proprietors of academies and amends duties contained within the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 to ensure that Designated Teachers are in place for cared for pupils. Designated Teachers are in place in all schools that are attended by pupils from Cheshire East, whether that is within the authority or not. We have also run designated lead training, which has been attended by teachers, members of governing bodies and safeguarding leads of these schools and have future training planned.
- 6.6. Section 8 extends the definition of permanence provisions to include 'kinship care, adoption and other types of long term care'. This is all now built into individual care plans for cared for children, or children subject to family court proceedings and is monitored through our fortnightly permanency forums, which are held within both the Cared For and Care Leavers Service and the Child Protection/Child in Need Service.
- 6.7. Section 9 amends part of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 to require courts and adoption agencies to consider the relationship between prospective adopters and children if the child is already placed with them. This is undertaken through the assessment work completed by our regional adoption agency 'Adoption Counts'.
- 6.8. Sections 10 and 11 amend previous Acts in both England and Wales, which now allows us to place children and young people into secure accommodation within Scotland. Whilst this is in place within our legal planning process, this has not had to be enacted over the past 12 month.

7. Being a Good Corporate Parent

Member Training

- 7.1. The majority of elected members have completed corporate parenting training. The feedback that was been received from elected members in relation to the training to date is being used to develop the on-going induction and training plan. The Head of Service, Service Manager for Cared for Children and Care Leavers and Councillor Merry are developing the new members training, alongside 'My Voice'. The new training will be co-produced and co-delivered with young people after the elections. It is proposed that there will be on-going training throughout the year (themed), alongside an induction booklet.

Star Celebrations

- 7.2. The star celebration planning group continues to meet each month since the last event in November 2018 and has already made significant strides in the planning of next years event, which will take place on 17th November 2019 at Congleton Town Hall.
- 7.3. The theme for next years event will be Pirates and Princesses. I am excited to report that the Crewe Lyceum Theatre have asked if they can become part of the planning group and they have offered to lend us scenery and props for the event.

8. Education, Employment and Employment Outcomes

National Apprenticeship Week

- 8.1. National Apprenticeship Week took place between 4th - 8th March. Cheshire East promoted the week through highlighting apprenticeship opportunities across the borough. As part of the promotion, the Council also challenged local employers to provide apprenticeship opportunities for some of our cared for children.

North West Guide around Exclusions

- 8.2. Increased exclusions in secondary schools are a regional issue in the North West and colleagues for the region have been coming together to produce a guide for schools.

9. Achieving Permanence and Keeping Children Safe

Children's Residential Homes Commission

The Council has awarded a contract to two providers of Children's Residential Homes, Safe Places and Horizon Care to establish four new children's homes across the borough. Work is underway to gain Ofsted registration to have these homes ready in the next 4 - 6 months. This includes a 'care hub model' to provide a joined up approach to support young people moving on positively to permanent homes or to rehabilitate them back to their families.

10. Health and Wellbeing Outcomes

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

- 10.1. At the January Corporate Parenting Committee Members requested further information around the strengths and difficulties questionnaire and scores in Cheshire East. Information will be presented to the March Committee for discussion.

Welcome Pack for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)

- 10.2. Work to establish a clear process to be followed when a UASC is brought into care is progressing well. A Welcome Pack has been produced. Consultation is underway to provide this in a more attractive and young person friendly format. Further discussion is also taking place regarding which languages it will be produced in.

11. Preparing for Adulthood

Care Leavers Annual Report

- 11.1. The Care Leavers Annual Report will be presented to the March Committee.

12. Implications of the Recommendations

12.1. Legal Implications

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

12.2. Finance Implications

There are no direct financial implications of this report.

12.3. Equality Implications

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

12.4. Human Resources Implications

There are no direct financial implications of this report.

12.5. 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.

12.6. Rural Communities Implications

None.

12.7. Implications for Children & Young People

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

12.8. Public Health Implications

12.8.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

13. Ward Members Affected

13.1. 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.

14. Consultation & Engagement

14.1. None.

15. Access to Information

15.1. None.

16. Contact Information

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

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