

Version Number: 1

BRIEFING REPORT

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 17 September 2019

Report Title: Corporate Parenting Update Report

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Dorothy Flude

Author: Keith Martin, Head of Cared for Children and Care Leavers

Senior Officer: Mark Palethorpe, Acting Executive Director of People

1. Introduction and Policy Context

- 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. Background

- 2.1. This update report aligns with the pledges of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

3. Quarter 1 Corporate Parenting Scorecard

- 3.1. The Quarter 1 Corporate Parenting Scorecard is attached at Appendix 1. In relation to those measures RAG rated red:
 - Measure 2.6 - % of secondary pupils with less than 90% attendance – The Virtual School Head meets with Advisors every 3 weeks to review all children and young people below 90% attendance. This includes analysing data for exclusions due to impact on attendance. Actions and targets are in place with a clear tracking document to review all children to monitor. Actions are put in place with Advisors to look at all children below 92% to set clear actions to support improving Persistent Absence figures. Analysis shows many children below 90% are those that are placed with parents/friends and family. This

data has been shared through the workstream meetings to look at how we can support through joint services. The Virtual School has a full time dedicated attendance worker from May 2019 to support targeted work with schools and families. This number has increased in June due to Year 11 leavers being recorded as study leave for a period of time. We will be introducing two attendance leads within the Virtual School Team to support reducing this figure during the next academic year. The new specialist attendance officer has been working throughout summer with identified children below 92% to ensure they are 'school ready' for September.

- Measure 2.15 % of care leavers who are NEET – of the 131 of care leavers making up the former relevant cohort of care leavers aged 19-21, currently 62 are recorded as NEET. However when you consider those engaged in positive activities or training/ re-engagement provision this reduces to 47 (36%).
- Measure 3.1 and 3.2 – cared for children in internal and external foster care - Ongoing pressures on internal provision and foster carer recruitment has meant that our use of external carers is higher than we would like. It is important to recognise however that 36% of these placements are long term matched placements offering security and stability for individuals.
- Measure 3.5 - % of cared for children with a plan for permanance endorsed at second review - Whilst there has been a drop in this quarter's figures, we continue to prioritise the identification of all potential options of permanency for children if they are not able to remain in the care of their parents. In doing this, at times, this can result in there being a delay in being able to confirm the plan of permanance. We do however consider this to be a valid delay when it results in a child being able to remain within their immediate or wider family network.
- Measure 4.2 - % of initial health assessments (IHA) completed by Paediatricians within 20 working days – We are aware that both the timeliness of IHA being requested and the quality of the request are causing this delay as it limits the information the paediatricians have available to them to complete the assessment. This has now formed a specific area for improvement which is being monitored through the 'Help me to be healthy' work stream. We have completed a briefing which has been sent to Administrators, Social Workers and Team Managers. In addition we have changed the Family Court request process to insure that the Court SWET (Social Work Evidence Template) document is sent with the request to improve the quality of the request. We have also changed the consent process, so that where the local authority has parental responsibility, the consent is being signed by the service to ensure that we remain in timescales

for families that are more difficult to engage. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and children who are 'Accommodated' under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 are a little more difficult as there is often limited supported document and Section 20 does not give the local authority a share of parental responsibility. We have introduced a weekly report which highlights whether a health assessment has or has not been requested. Whilst this is reactive as opposed to proactive, it will hopefully reduce the length of time that some are out of date.

4. Pledge 1 - Being a Good Corporate Parent

- 4.1. Consideration is being given to work of the priority 1 and priority 3 work streams as we have seen through the Operational Group that this work is beginning to duplicate across both work streams. We would envisage that both work streams will merge into one and continue to work on both priorities.
- 4.2. The work stream will then continue to focus on the following areas:
 - Training, support and direct work tools to be developed for social workers, foster carers and family around caring for teenagers and balancing safe risk taking and independence skills.
 - Embedding understanding of warning signs of placement instability to aid social workers in recognising signs of risk of placement instability, to ensure support can be offered in a timely manner to prevent a placement breakdown and unnecessary moves for children and young people. Whilst stability meetings have increased, at present the recognition of need for support and request for the meetings is not being progressed as rapidly as we would want.
 - Continuation of the use of trajectories with an aim of all children placed at home having a signs of safety trajectory and safety plan in place to aid discharge of the care order.
 - Mobility mapping for all care leavers to be developed to ensure that they have clear support networks outside of the social worker and personal assistant roles that can remain with them into adulthood.
 - SDQ working group to ensure that Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire resources are developed and that triangulation of views can be considered, to develop holistic picture of emotional health.
 - Targeted mentoring to be provided from Voice for Children for up to 5, 16 and 17 year olds, that do not yet have the experience and skills to manage semi supported living without additional support and are experience frequent placement breakdowns.

- Development of life story work and use of words and pictures to help children and young people understand their journey through care and aims for success.
- Corporate Parenting Induction Training will be established with a rolling pattern of focussed thematic training through the remainder of the year
- Corporate Parenting Basic Training will be established for all other elected members

5. Pledge 2 - Education, Employment and Employment Outcomes

- 5.1. We are so proud of the A level results for our cared for young people this summer. One young person achieved the B, B, C grades that they needed to attend university studying photography. Another young person achieved B in English Literature, a D in Art and a D* in their BTEC Applied Science and will be starting a degree in Architecture at a Russell Group University. They are both, quite rightly 'over the moon' with their achievements.
- 5.2. Both of these have been possible due to the hard work of these young people and the close working relationships between the children's social work teams and the Virtual School.

6. Pledge 3 - Achieving Permanence and Keeping Children Safe Being a Good Corporate Parent

- 6.1. A detailed report on pledge 3 will be presented to the Committee in September.
- 6.2. In addition we have submitted a bid to the Department for Education to secure funding for the development of a 'Mockingbird' fostering programme that will work as part of our 'Bespoke' as we continue to review and develop our fostering services. We would particularly invite engagement and scrutiny through participation at our Fostering Development Board.

7. Pledge 4 – Health and Wellbeing

- 7.1. Following the 'Help me to be healthy' group, the Cared for Children Specialist Nurses will now be regularly attending service meetings to provide an update for Social Workers around the health processes for cared for children. This will include discussion around the requirements for making a request for an initial health assessment, the role of the nurse specialists and how the health needs of cared for children are identified and met.

- 7.2. The Dental Adviser for NHS England has now been added to the escalation protocol which has recently been reviewed by the group.
- 7.3. Cared for children and care leavers have been added to the priority work stream for children living with mental health issues, which is a task and finish group within the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children partnership.

8. Pledge 5 – Preparing for Adulthood

- 8.1. We have had a Care Leaver give birth to her second child, she is a great mother to both children and is not receiving any intervention. She has been able to provide them with positive parenting experiences following clear support and intervention for her.
- 8.2. One young person is completing her final year in her Social Work Degree at university and will be completing her final placement with Cheshire East Child in Need/ Child Protection Team. She will be a fantastic contributor to developing our family business. She continues to be a fantastic mother to her daughter balancing full time care and study.
- 8.3. A care leaver within the service has completed a work experience for a week in Italy working in a summer camp with children. She also volunteers every Saturday at a charity shop and is working really hard.

9. Implications

9.1. Legal Implications

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

9.2. Financial Implications

- 9.2.1. There are no direct financial implications of this report.

9.3. Human Resources Implications

- 9.3.1. There are no direct human resource implications of this report.