



Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Report 2018/2019

Foreword

As corporate parents, it is our responsibility and duty to treat our children in care and care leavers as we would our own children; championing and promoting their needs at every opportunity. That is why the Corporate Parenting Committee is one of the most important committees in the Council; our role and remit is to challenge and hold to account the services provided by the Council and our partners for all cared for children and care leavers in Cheshire East.

This year we have focused on strengthening our collective role as corporate parents. The launch of our new three year Corporate Parenting Strategy, including five key pledges to cared for children and care leavers sets out the joint commitment of Council staff, elected members and partner agencies to improve outcomes for our children and young people. I am pleased to report that our full Council signed up to the pledges in December 2018.

The contribution from children and young people from My Voice (our children in care council) has been invaluable in helping us to understand their experiences and how we can better support them. At our Star Celebration event in November 2018 we celebrated the achievements of each and every one of our cared for children and care leavers.

Whilst the committee has scrutinised a number of services over the year, there has also been some external scrutiny and

challenge. A Focussed Visit from Ofsted in October 2018 looked at our arrangements for permanency planning and achieving permanence, with a specific focus on children in residential and foster care, and on children subject to care orders who are placed at home with parents. This showed that children have increasingly benefitted from our strengthened focus on permanence planning at both a strategic and operational level, however there is more to do around improving their assessments and plans.

In addition, the follow up visit from Mark Riddell, the National Advisor for Care Leavers, in October 2018 confirmed that we have a strong offer for our care leavers. He also recognised how our 'elected members have embraced a 'Championing' approach which in essence enables elected members to get into the detail of the offer to care leavers'.



I am pleased to present the Committee's 2018-19 Annual Report. This highlights our progress and achievements over what has been a busy year. There is still more we can do to improve outcomes for our cared for children and care leavers and this report also sets out our priorities for the forthcoming year.

Cllr Jos Saunders

The Corporate Parenting Committee

Effective Corporate Parenting requires knowledge and awareness of the needs of cared for children, young people leaving care as well as the services that they receive. Our Corporate Parenting responsibility is a shared one that requires a high level of commitment from the leadership of the Council, as well as the support of all council employees and partners.

The Corporate Parenting Committee is comprised of twelve cross-party members with Council Officers in attendance to support agenda items, as required. The Committee is administered by Officers from Democratic Services.

The Committee has met on six occasions in 2018-19:

9th May 2018

3rd July 2018

18th September 2018

13th November 2018

22nd January 2019

19th March 2019

The Committee receives regular updates on local and national issues relating to cared for children and young people who are leaving care.

The function of the Committee is to oversee the Corporate Parenting responsibilities of everyone involved with Cheshire East's cared for children and young people.

It works to ensure that the statutory duties placed upon Cheshire East Council are met.

The Committee has reviewed its Terms of Reference for 2019-20 and the revised version is attached at Appendix 1.



Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledges

The new Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018-20 sets out a number of pledges we are making to our cared for children and care leavers. These are based on what these children and young people have told us will make the most difference to their lives:

Pledge One

We will be a good corporate parent

Pledge Two

We will improve education, training and employment outcomes

Pledge Three

We will work to achieve permanence and keep children safe

Pledge Four

We will improve health and wellbeing outcomes

Pledge Five

We will prepare young people for adulthood

Each Committee meeting is focused on one of the Corporate Parenting Pledges from the new Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018-20. Performance reporting and impact is scrutinised by the Committee, along with issues and risks.

Five Work-stream Groups, aligned to the five pledge areas, have been established to ensure that this strategy is delivered effectively.



Corporate Parenting Strategy Progress

Pledge One

We will be a good corporate parent
Staff and elected members will understand their roles and responsibilities and be ambitious corporate parents, who advocate and champion the needs of cared for children and care leavers in everything they do.
We will know ourselves and the needs of our children and young people well and design and deliver services that meet these needs.
Decisions about children and young people's lives, and the services that support them, will be made with them and for them . We will always value their views.

What the data tells us

- At the end of March 2019 there were 483 children and young people being cared for by Cheshire East. This is an increase of 6 children and young people from March 2018.
- This equates to 63 cared for children per 10,000 of the child population within Cheshire East, which is the same as last year.

What have we done? (Committee and Officers)

- We have reviewed and refreshed the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2018–20.
- The Committee has ensured that the seven principles for corporate parenting have been incorporated into our 'Local Offer' and has been instrumental in the development of our 'pledges' to cared for children and care leavers, which I am so happy to say, received commitment across all political groups at the full council held on 8th December 2018.
- We have considered the Children's Social Care Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2018–20.
- The Committee has given consideration to the outcomes of the Care Crisis Review, which was facilitated by the Family Rights Group, to examine the reason for the national rise in care proceedings and the rise in children entering the care system.
- We have received quarterly updates on our cared for children and care leavers through the Corporate Parenting Scorecard.
- We have had regular updates from the Participation Team and as the Chair I have attended 'My Voice' to develop a direct relationships with some of our cared for children.
- Members of the Committee have attended corporate parenting work streams and we have developed guidance for corporate parent visits to services.

- The majority of elected members have undertaken corporate parenting training and completed 'Pen-Pictures'.
- We have ensured that cared for children have advocacy by supporting the extension of the 'Voice for Children' contract by twelve months.
- We celebrated the achievements of all of our cared for children and care leavers at the Star Celebration held at Wychwood Park in November.
- Officers and some elected members have completed 'Signs of Safety' training.
- We celebrated the Cared for Children's Service achieving the Investing in Children Award.

What impact has it made?

- Following feedback received directly from our children and young people, we changed the name of their service from the Permanence and Through Care Service to the Service for Care for Children and Care Leavers.
- We are already seeing an impact which we believe is due to the implementation of our 'Signs of Safety' model, through a reducing trend in cared for numbers over the past year and a more recent decrease in the number of applications being filed with the Family Court.

Next steps

- New members of the committee will need to attend training and complete their own 'Pen Picture'.

- Celebrate the achievements of our cared for children at this year's Star celebration being held on 24th November at Tatton Park. Come as a Pirate or Princess!!!!
- New members will need to be linked to the Corporate Parenting work streams as well as being included within the rota for frontline visits to cared for and care leaver services.



Pledge Two

We will improve education, employment and training outcomes

We will have **high aspirations** for every child and young person and will **help them to achieve their ambitions**, using opportunities in the 'family business' and our contacts so that they can be **happy and successful** in their education, training and employment.

Every child and young person will have an **education plan that is targeted to enable them to reach their full potential**

We will strive to that ensure that every child and young person will have **access to consistent, high quality, well matched, full time opportunities**.

What the data tells us

- Attendance at both primary and secondary has improved this year, with the average primary attendance rising from 95% to 97% and the average secondary attendance rising from 93% to 94%.
- 82% of cared for children are in 'Good' or 'Outstanding' schools.
- 10% of our care leavers are attending University.
- We have a small number of cared for children (9) who live in residential schools.

- 95% of cared for children have had their Personal Education Plan completed each term.
- 100% of cared for children were accessing 2 – 4 year old early education funding.
- The percentage of cared for pupils who gained Level 4 and above in Maths and English was 19%, which is the same as last year and slightly above the national average.
- 54% of the cohort gained 5+ GCSE qualifications between grades 9 and 1.

What have we done? (Committee and Officers)

- We have considered the outcomes from the Local Area SEND Inspection and the development of a new Special School in Crewe.
- We received the Annual Report from the Head of the Virtual School and considered how she would monitor the changes in the administration of the Pupil Premium funding.
- In August we heard about the £1,000 bursary that the Government has introduced to secure apprenticeships' for care leavers.

What impact has it made?

- A SPEED (Sixteen plus education and employment destinations) working group was set up in 2015 and is now well established as a forum for issue raising and action planning for post-16 cared for and care leavers.

This group uses the latest data to identify young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or likely to be so and what can be done to address this. Good collaboration across the young person's network has resulted in the level of NEET amongst care leavers to reduce from 32% in May 2017 to 15% in May 2018.

- A parallel group for school age children has now been established called RAIC, (Raising achievement in care). The aim of this group is to ensure that all parties share the responsibility for promoting aspirations and achievements and are active in their efforts.

Next steps

- Identify and implement changes resulting from the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which includes responsibilities for the Virtual School Head teacher around previously looked after children as well as looked after children and to promote mental health and attachment awareness in schools.



Pledge Three

We will work to achieve permanence and keep children safe

We will strive to ensure that every child and young person will have the **opportunity to live in a good, safe home locally**, either with their family or in another permanent home. All decisions will be made and reviewed with them without delay.

We will **respect those people who are important to our children and young people** and make sure that these safe relationships are sustained.

We will **keep children and young people safe**.

What the data tells us

- 97% for cared for children reviews took place within statutory timescales, with 100% of these children being involved directly in their reviews.
- 265 cared for children live with foster families, 65 live with family and friend carers, 53 live with their parents, 52 children have plans for adoption and 33 live within residential care.
- 96 children achieved a plan for permanence with their foster carers and a further 13 have remained in 'staying put' arrangements with their foster carers after they became 18.

- 30% of children who ceased to be cared for during the past year have become subject to Special Guardianship Orders.



What have we done? (Committee and Officers)

- We have heard about the development of our new residential children's homes and the organisations who were successful as part of our tender process. The committee have regularly been updated in relation to the mobilisation of the 5, 3 bedded homes and how these are developing into a wrap-around hub based model, which

will be similar to the nationally recognised North Yorkshire 'No Wrong Door' model. Following co-production activities at 'My Voice' Children and Young People have named this project 'Bespoke'.

- We gave consideration to the DfE commissioned Foster Care Review (Sir Martin Narey and Mark Owers) recommendations and heard from the Foster Care Panel Chair through her annual report.
- We considered the Annual Independent Review Officers Report and how the outcomes for our cared for children and care leavers are quality assured.
- We considered the Local Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report and about the changes that will be introduced once the LSCB moves to the Children's Safeguarding Partnership.
- We learnt about the national protocol for reducing the unnecessary criminalisation of cared for children.

What impact has it made?

- The amount of children and young people involved in their reviews is excellent performance and highlights that the voice of the child is prioritised within care planning.

Next steps

- Further develop our foster care services in line with the 36 recommendations of the Narey and Owers Review.

- The Committee needs to play an active role in the development of 'Bespoke'.



Pledge Four

We will improve health and wellbeing outcomes

We are committed to **understanding the health needs** of our children and young people **as early as possible** and to ensure they are **given the highest priority** in every service.

We will **equip** our children and young people to have **high aspirations for their own health**.

What the data tells us

- 76% of Initial Health Assessments (IHA's) are completed within 20 days.
- 91% of cared for children have had their health reviews completed.
- 63% of care leavers have been provided with a health passport.

What have we done? (Committee and Officers)

- We have considered the changes to the Family Nurse Partnership.
- We have considered the Annual Health Report for Cared for Children and Care Leavers.

What impact has it made?

- Due to the development of an escalation process across Cheshire Wirral Partnership (CWP) and the local authority, the timeliness of IHA's being completed within 20 days has improved, however we can do more to ensure that this is improved and sustained.
- Young pregnant care leavers up to the age of 24 (previously 19) now have a named specialist nurse supporting them through their pregnancy up to the 2nd birthday of their child.
- We have increased scrutiny of the cancelled or 'did not attend' (DNA'd) health appointments, which is also being monitored through the 'help me to be healthy' workstream

Next steps

- Ensure more timely updates around health outcomes (due to the nature of the recording systems across social care and the NHS, the health report for cared for children is approximately 12 months out of date when the report is presented to Committee).
- Continued scrutiny of the IHA 20 day timeline and information around Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaires (SDQs).



Pledge Five

We will prepare young people for adulthood
We will support young people early with the skills needed to prepare for their future through access to a range of good quality services.
We will be a consistent guide for our young people. We will celebrate their successes and support them when things don't go well .
We will respect our care leavers as young adults and adapt our relationships to their needs.

What the data tells us

- There are 234 Care Leavers who are currently eligible for services.
- 100% of care leavers have an up to date Pathway Plan.
- There are 12 care Leavers who are currently in post-18 apprenticeships.
- 25% of 16 to 18 year old care leavers are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Whilst there have been improvements in the number of NEET care leavers over the past 12 months due to the direct work being undertaken by the Personal Assistants, we know that this is an area that requires additional scrutiny.

What have we done? (Committee and Officers)

- Considered the Care Leavers Annual Report.
- Arranged a visit by Mark Riddell (MBE), the National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers, and received his report.
- Recommissioned Supported Lodgings.
- Developed the Local Offer for Care Leavers.
- Implemented the Care Leavers Covenant.

What impact has it made?

- All care leavers have the opportunity to have a Personal Advisor up to the age of 25, which provides extended support as and when the young person may need it.
- Mark Riddell's initial visit highlighted that our operational model was strong, but that it could be improved through a better corporate offer. Corporate Parenting Committee decided to refocus and address buy-in from Health, Housing and Adult Service providers to better support care leavers as they move in independence.
- After his follow up visit in October, Mark Riddell wrote to us saying the following:

'I heard about the progress you have made regarding the new Corporate Parenting Duties that came into force on 1st April and how your elected members have embraced a 'Championing' approach which in essence enables elected members to get into the detail of the offer to care leavers.'

The housing offer and opportunities in the family business are two examples of where elected members have paid particular attention and as a result your Ignition Panel is ensuring that the Housing offer is good and data relating to EET has improved. I also heard of your ambition to ensure care leavers have an offer from health up to 25yrs that is outside of eligibility and based on a needs led approach with clear ideas of redesigning a service to meet that need. Alongside this I heard about closer working relationships with your key partner agencies – DWP, Family Nurse Partnership, Mentors for care leavers through a commissioned approach with Pure Insight and a specialist worker in the team to support your UASC young people. Finally how you have captured the voice of care leavers by engaging them in the coproduction of the local offer which has extended to them being at the Corporate Parenting Board to ask the question ‘is this good enough for your child’.

- Our ‘Ignition Panel’ received for a national LGC Award in the category of public and private partnerships.

Next steps

- Our ‘preparing for adulthood’ model for children with disabilities and complex needs has been acknowledged by the government’s Chief Social Worker for Children and Families, Isabelle Trowler, who is planning on visiting us with her review and research team later in 2019.



Priorities for 2019-20

- Ensure an effective induction for new members of the Corporate Parenting Committee and continue to improve the training and development offer to Corporate Parenting Committee and other elected members.
- Continue to monitor and scrutinise the progress and impact of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and the role of members.
- Support and scrutinise the development of new ways of working, including development of our 'Bespoke' project and new residential homes, to ensure that more of our cared for children live locally.
- Support and scrutinise the review of our arrangements to recruit, retain and support our Foster Carers.
- Increase the engagement between Committee members and our cared for children and care leavers.
- Consider the impact of the Children and Social Work Act 2017.





TERMS OF REFERENCE

Cheshire East Corporate Parenting Committee

Purpose

The purpose of the Corporate Parenting Committee in its role as an advisory committee to the Cabinet is to ensure that the Council effectively discharges its role as Corporate Parent for all children and young people in care and care leavers from 0- 25 years of age and holds partners to account for the discharge of their responsibilities.

Terms of Reference

1. Act as advocates for cared for children and care leavers, ensuring that their needs are addressed through key plans, policies and strategies throughout the Council and its commissioned services.
2. Ensure key strategic plans and reports relating to children in care and care leavers including the Corporate Parenting Strategy, Sufficiency Statement and Children and Young People's Plan.
3. Oversee the implementation of Cheshire East's Corporate Parenting Strategy and action plan and monitor the quality and effectiveness of services to ensure they fulfil the council's responsibilities.
4. Monitor the quality of care delivered by Cheshire East's residential children's homes through visits and reports including summary reports of Ofsted inspections.
5. Review the performance of the Council in relation to outcomes for children and young people in care via the scrutiny of both quarterly performance reports and annual reports, including the Health of Cared for Children and Care Leavers, the Virtual School, Fostering and the Independent Reviewing Service,.
6. Establish an environment whereby Elected Members and young people work together to address the needs and aspirations of Cheshire East's children and young people in care and empower children and young people to participate in decision making with adults.
7. Oversee, with the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the implementation of best practice principles in all aspects of service delivery, with the aim of producing positive outcomes for children and young people in care.
8. Support the work of foster carers and adopters in making a difference to the care and support they provide to children and young people in care and those adopted.

9. Make sure that staff and partners commit to follow the pledges to cared for children and young people and care leavers set out in the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Governance

The Committee will:

- meet bi-monthly;
- report to the Council's Cabinet on at least an annual basis;
- report to the Council's Scrutiny Committee annually: and
- include young people representatives from My Voice (Cheshire East's Children in Care Council).

Administration

The Board will be serviced by Democratic Services in line with other Council Committees.

Minutes and agendas will be distributed and published no later than 5 clear working days prior to the meeting.

The meetings will take place out of school hours to enable cared for children and young people to participate.

Review

These terms of reference will be reviewed yearly.