

Corporate Parenting Committee

Date of Meeting: 21 January 2020

Report Title: Corporate Parenting Update Report and Scorecard

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Kathryn Flavell, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

Senior Officer: Mark Palethorpe, Acting Executive Director of People

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. It also updates members on performance measures in quarter 2 of 2019-20.

2. Recommendation/s

- 2.1. Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to:
 - 2.1.1. Note the contents of the report.
 - 2.1.2. Scrutinise areas where expected levels of performance are not being met in the scorecard at Appendix 1.

3. Reasons for Recommendation/s

- 3.1. The Corporate Parenting Committee is an 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 needs 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 pledges of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- 5.2. Children Social Care received a 3 week Inspection of Local Authority Services (ILACS) in November 2019 and the final report will be published on 9th January 2020.

6. Quarter 2 Corporate Parenting Scorecard

- 6.1. The Quarter 2 Corporate Parenting Scorecard is attached at Appendix 1. In relation to those measures RAG rated red:

Measure P3.1 - Number of cared for children in internal foster care

6.1.1 Cheshire East entered into the fostering collaboration, Foster4, in 2018. On the 18th November 2019 a new marketing campaign was launched which resulted in an uplift in expressions of interest and positive initial visits being undertaken.

6.1.2 Cheshire East are also at the implementation phase of the Mockingbird model. This initiative is being developed together with the Fostering Network and we are hoping this will be an addition to Foster4 in attracting potential new foster carers to join us on our journey.

Measure P3.2 - Number of cared for children in external foster care

6.1.3 Where children are unable to be accommodated in house and need a fostering environment, these homes are commissioned from the independent market. We ensure that quality and cost is robustly scrutinised and any opportunities to place children back into internal fostering provision utilised, where appropriate.

Measure P3.4 - % cared for children placed over 20 miles from home address (Cheshire East and out of borough)

6.1.4 Where cared for children reside at a distance from Cheshire East we ensure that they receive the same level of service to those children living in the borough. In the main these arrangements are made with good matching and when children are being placed for adoption or with extended family members.

Measure P3.5 - % of cared for children with a plan for permanence endorsed at 2nd review

6.1.5 We have seen a drop in the number of children with an endorsed plan of permanence at their second review. For a small number of larger families (who then impact significantly as a percentage), this is due to delays in the Court process leading to a delay in achieving permanence for children as there remain ongoing assessments. For a number of the other children, we have tried to work with the family appropriately outside of the Court arena, but have unfortunately needed to issue Care Proceedings at which point Court directed assessments have resulted in plans of permanence not being able to be achieved at the 4 month stage. A number of these children are however with family members where they will remain long term so the impact upon them is minimal.

Measure P3.17 - average number of days between placement order and match with adoptive family (A2 national indicator)

6.1.6 Nationally there are challenges in recruiting new adopters, however the vast majority of Cheshire East children with a plan of adoption are placed with Adoption Counts carers.

6.1.7 By the end of Q2 2019/20, 10 children had achieved permanence by way of adoption. In Q2 of 2018/19, 7 children had achieved permanence by way of adoption. Therefore despite some delay in children moving to their adoptive families following the making of a Placement Order, more children are achieving adoption year on year.

7. Pledge 1 - Being a Good Corporate Parent

Star Celebrations

7.1. On Sunday 24th November 2019 Cheshire East held the annual star celebration event at Tatton Park. The theme of the event was princesses and pirates and many of our children, young people, family members and carers dressed up for the occasion. Officers and members supported with the day which was a huge success and celebrated the many achievements of our children and young people. As ever we will build on the event in readiness for next year.

Engagement with Corporate Parenting

- 7.2. Officers have now provided members with a menu of activities to support in the delivery of the corporate parenting strategy. Elected members are asked to return their preferences of activities by the 6th January 2020 to be able to support functions such as attendance at corporate parenting sub groups and participating in fostering panel.

November childrens rights month

- 7.3. November childrens rights month offered cared for children and care leavers the opportunity to take over various roles such as an Engagement Officer in Cheshire Police and a Team Manager for Cared for Children. One of our care leavers completed a piece of work around the Care Leavers local offer and was supported to write a policy to support young people and professionals around transgender.
- 7.4. Many of our team donated food and personal care items to support our care leavers who are pregnant or are parents, which were well received.

8. Pledge 2 - Education, Employment and Employment Outcomes

Post 16 education

- 8.1. The subgroup is focusing on achieving apprenticeships for cared for children and care leavers in and out of the Council. This is a measurable target within our corporate parenting strategy and local offer. Alongside this there is a drive to strengthen work experience opportunities within the council.

School age children

- 8.2. The sub group is also focusing on raising attainment for our cared for children and improving their outcomes. Cared for children can experience unplanned changes to their education when they come into care or during their time in care and therefore there is a greater challenge to ensure that they are supported above and beyond so that they achieve their potential.

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

Achievement

9.1. For all Cheshire East children, permanence is the absolute priority. There have been some measurable outcomes in the last 12 months such as embedding the use of stability meetings, which have resulted in children having every opportunity to achieve permanence without disruption. The group however recognise that there is more to do and so have developed a new action plan to continue to target this area. The action plan will focus on training and supporting practitioners and foster carers when caring for teenagers, identifying the 'warning signs' when a placement could be becoming unstable and embedding a new Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) process to better understand the emotional needs of our cared for children when they experience change.

10. Pledge 4 – We will Improve Health and Wellbeing Outcomes

Initial Health Assessments

10.1. The help me to be healthy subgroup met to refocus on the challenges identified in the completion of the initial health assessment. It has been agreed that jointly health and social care senior managers will scrutinise the data to understand why there has been a change in direction and reduction in initial health assessments being undertaken in the statutory timescales. An update will be provided to the committee in March 2020.

Emotional wellness

10.2. The subgroup also focuses on how we understand the emotional well being of our cared for children and care leavers. Pure Insights attended the meeting in November and highlighted the benefits observed from the support offered by their emotional well being worker.

11. Pledge 5 – We will prepare young people for Adulthood

Recommissioning of 16+ accommodation

11.1. Cheshire East will begin to tender for the 16+ accommodation offer in Spring 2020. The commissioning and children's teams have already begun to write the specification with children and young people in order to ensure that their experiences inform the types, locations and support made available from any future procured providers.

- 11.2. There has been a recent focus on care leavers experience of loneliness and how we can as corporate parents support our care leavers to be in touch with members of the community. Pure Insights, a commissioned provider, support many of our care leavers to be included in families and wider community events.

12. National or legislative changes

Funding Instruction for local authorities in the support of the EU Settlement Scheme

- 12.1. On the 12 November 2019 the Home Office issued guidance to local authorities in relation to the support required in securing citizenship for cared for children and care leavers from the European Union (EU), European Economic Area (EEA) and Swiss Citizens. Local Authorities have 12 months to support care leavers to apply to secure their citizenship (as has been the case historically) however can now apply to the Home Office for reimbursement of administration costs. This demonstrates further commitment from the Home Office in supporting local authorities with the costs associated with caring for UASC young people.

13. Implications of the Recommendations

13.1. Legal Implications

- 13.1.1. The government has confirmed that the local authority will make EU Settlement Scheme applications on behalf of children 'looked after' by the local authority. For other categories of children in care and care leavers, local authorities should inform relevant parties and support with applications as necessary.

13.2. Financial Implication

- 13.2.1. Local Authorities have 12 months to support care leavers to apply to secure their citizenship and can apply to the Home Office for reimbursement of administration costs.

13.3. Equality Implications

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

13.4. Human Resources Implications

13.4.1. There are no direct human resource implications of this report.

13.5. Risk Management Implications

13.5.1. Cared for children and care leavers are a vulnerable group that are at risk of a number of factors, including poor education and training, health, safeguarding and transition into adulthood; the Corporate Parenting Strategy prioritises these areas.

13.6. Rural Communities Implications

13.6.1. There are no direct rural communities' implications of this report.

13.7. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

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

13.8. Public Health Implications

13.8.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

13.9. Climate Change Implications

13.9.1. There is a commitment to ensure that Cheshire East cared for children live as close to their home community as possible, wherever this is safe to do so. This will ensure that children can continue to feel connected to their families and local community. It also reduces the geographical footprint of children, families and staff as travel is reduced.

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

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

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