

# **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Parenting Committee**  
held on Tuesday, 19th January, 2021 as a Virtual Meeting

## **PRESENT**

Councillor K Flavell (Chairman)  
Councillors R Bailey, M Beanland, J Buckley, C Bulman, P Butterill, S Edgar  
and S Holland

## **VISITING MEMBERS**

Councillor Arthur Moran

## **ALSO PRESENT**

Kerry Birtles- Director of Children's Social Care, Children in Need & Child Protection  
Laura Rogerson- Head of Service to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Virtual School Headteacher for Cared for Children  
Keith Martin- Head of Service for Children with Disabilities and Fostering  
Lauren Conway- Interim Head of Service for Children's Service Development and Partnerships  
Nick Crick- Interim Head of Service for Cared for Services and Care Leavers  
Shan McPartland- Designated Nurse Looked after Children and Care Leavers  
NHS Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)  
Helen Davies- Democratic Services Officer

## **26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies of Absence were received from Councillors James Barber, Jos Saunders and Mick Warren.

## **27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **28 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED-

That the minutes of the meeting 17 November 2020 be received and noted as a correct and accurate record.

## **29 CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE UPDATE REPORT**

Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care, Children in Need & Child Protection presented the item to the Committee and Nick Crick the Interim Head of Service for Cared for Services and Care Leavers was available to answer any questions the Committee had.

Kerry advised that at the time of writing, Cheshire East was in Tier 2, High Alert restrictions but following that the country went into a third lockdown, the focus remained on the impact for children and young people.

The regulations for social workers had remained the same as April 2020, they were reviewed in September 2020 and would be in place until end of March 2021. There had been a lot of positive feedback from frontline colleagues who had felt supported within the service.

There was an update to report following government announcement on what lockdown meant for vulnerable children going into education.

Carers, parents and young people now had more knowledge around the pandemic and making informed decisions that related to the pandemic.

Early in the pandemic there had been a scoping exercise of 534 young people that showed 150 Cared for Children were Not in Education.

Kerry gave some reassurance to the Committee that the service was clear about who these children were and there was risk assessments for each situation and the challenge was back to safeguarding children's partnership.

The service wanted to maintain the same level of service delivery that enabled children to see birth parents. Permanency was something that had increased.

Last year, 14 young people achieved permanency, there had been 12 to date due in part to good efforts by court for an even spread of prioritisation. Courts deal with new and emerging cases but also had responsibility for permanency too. This area of work was moving at pace now.

In terms of Children with adoption, there was more work to do because of drift and delay in achieving permanency.

There were six children no longer in care but around 50 needed to move through system and were no longer in care. The service did not want children in care if they didn't need to be.

In terms of the Care leaver cohort, these were vulnerable, some had the impact of living alone, some felt isolated, some were young adults who had transitioned earlier and now had layers of complexity because of pandemic. The service would keep reaching out to them. There had been a piece of work commissioned with CCG, that related to emotional well being and fitness. Vulnerable young people now had free access to wellbeing courses.

There had been one young person who was Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) who wanted to become self employed and was given some funding to develop maternity bags and that generated employment for herself.

The Committee were given the opportunity to ask questions.

There was some discussion around the access vulnerable children and young people had to devices, Kerry gave reassurance to the Committee that Schools were open and welcoming, and where remote learning is in place, internet and devices had been put in place.

The Committee noted there had been some publicity regarding businesses with spare devices that had been utilised for Cared for Children.

Nick advised the Committee that all Cared for Children had been written to, to ensure they knew they were supported within the care system.

It was noted the increase in NEET children related to Cared for Children and this cohort of children and young people was easier for the Council to influence as the Council was the corporate parent. There were bigger numbers of NEET in Child Protection and Children in Need teams where the parents had the decision making

The Committee noted that the target for Personal Education Plans was to get to 90% by Christmas, Kerry advised the landscape had changed and Children in transition groups and key stages taking SATS had been prioritised. This could be an area for more detail at the next committee.

RESOLVED-

That the report be received and noted

### **30 HEALTH OF CARED FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ANNUAL REPORT**

Shan McPartland- Designated Nurse Looked after Children and Care Leavers NHS Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) presented the item to the Committee that highlighted the responsibilities for the CCG and the key legislation that CCG worked from.

The Committee were made aware that the Annual Report covered 2019-2020, however toward end of year, the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on the work of the last quarter.

The Committee were advised that in April 2020 the 4 CCGs in Cheshire merged to become one CCG Cheshire, however for purposes of the report, the data referred to the west and south/mid CCG.

There were 533 cared for children at that time, a 10% increase on the previous year and there had been a rise of 24% the year before. 170

children were placed into Cheshire East by other Local Authorities. Received same service that Cheshire East would receive- not the case in other areas, unwanted variation- quality of arrangements CQC 2016, not seen, not heard- areas such as access to timely health services and mental health for looked for children across England can vary.

There was a statutory requirement of 20 days for children to have a health assessment with a paediatrician. There had been a drop due to capacity within clinics as doctors had been isolating because of Covid and shortages of staff.

There had been challenges this year within the pandemic, but there had been greater scrutiny of late appointments and there was a focus to make pathways more streamlined.

In terms of the key performance indicators- dental checks for children across Cheshire east whilst was consistent, was lower than the CCG would like. There had been extreme difficulties accessing dental services during the pandemic. Face to face appointments were at 40% capacity once reopened after lockdown.

The CCG were trying to create a commissioning pathway to address dental services for cared for and looked after children nationally.

Immunisation was excellent and well above national average. Developmental checks, performed well, Care leaver health summaries- 2019/20 100% care leavers received a summary of their health.

Throughout year, themes identified were as expected: wellbeing issues, attachment, previous trauma, smoking and substance, social communication difficulties, and self-harm.

There were gaps and risk that related to the mental and emotional support for young people up to 25 and children placed into Cheshire East by other Local Authorities, these risks had been escalated risks and were being reviewed nationally.

The 2020-21 priorities included:

- continuation of reviewing arrangement for Initial Health Assessments;
- Annual Quality Assurance visit to Prover services by Designated Nurse; and
- Development of an effective tool that can be used to measure health outcomes for Cared for Children

In summary 2019-20 had not been easy in addressing priorities but the CCG was looking to address the work for 2020-21.

The Committee were invited to ask questions.

There was some discussion about how the nurse did health visits for out of area children. Shan advised there was a notification system and handover from nurses. For any issues that related to Outpatient, hospital, ADHD or speech this was handed over to where child is placed. If the level of service was not as good, Cheshire will retain the workload and nurses will travel to ensure health needs are being met.

With regard to immunisation, if the child was below school age it was received as part of national healthy child programme and done at the GP practice. School children are included within schools.

**RESOLVED:**

That Shan McPartland be thanked for her attendance and presentation and that the report be received and noted.

### **31 FOSTERING SERVICE PRESENTATION**

Kerry Birtles, Director of Children's Social Care, Children in Need & Child Protection presented the item to the Committee on behalf of Keith Martin, Head of Service for Children with Disabilities and Fostering.

The Committee were advised that following an independent fostering review, the Council had severed the relationship with Foster 4. Cheshire East felt it was important to have a clear vision for fostering with an aligned vision and strategy.

The Communications team within the Council supported the marketing strategy (that related to the recruitment of mainstream foster carers) and used marketing as a principle within a workstream.

There had been positive feedback from the community about the advertisements, with powerful and impactful mail drops. The marketing extended to buses and maildrops, and included pictures to resonate with potential fosterers.

There had been 90 enquiries following the departure from Foster 4. Expressions of interest (EOI) were then assessed in-house. During the same period in the previous year, the service received 59 Enquiries and 15 EOI. Comparatively this equated to 31 additional enquiries to the year before with a 50% increase on previous EOIs.

To date there had been 14 new homes found for fostered children.

The Committee were advised that the whilst the marketing needed momentum, it was important to find the right moments to avoid messages becoming white noise.

There were plans to implement a Mobile messaging app, this would enable someone to answer enquiries immediately and stop potential people going to other agencies.

There had been approval of 7 new mainstream foster carers compared to 4. Kerry also advised that currently the context was that there were people not in employment who could potentially foster but the service needed to ensure any ambition from a potential foster carer was realistic and could meet the needs of the child.

143 children currently lived with foster carers agencies. 50 had been matched with carers that are identified as forever homes. 5 carers had left the agency to come to Cheshire East which demonstrated the offer and relationships that were being built. Cheshire East was a strong competitor now and the cost saving was now evident.

The Chairman noted that this was a very positive news story and the Committee were given the opportunity to ask questions.

There was some discussion on what made a suitable foster carer, Kerry advised the recruitment strategy was focused on this area to demonstrate there was no discrimination, there had been a young man with complex disabilities fostered with a man, the male carer had previously adopted and the complex child fitted in and came out of care.

There were 4 or 5 respite carers however this was a specific skill set to care for children with special needs.

RESOLVED:

That Kerry Birtles be thanked for the update and that it be received and noted.

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and concluded at 5.24 pm

Councillor K Flavell (Chairman)