

## **Corporate Parenting Committee**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> November 2022
<b>Report Title:</b>	Corporate Parenting Q1 score card 2022/23
<b>Report of:</b>	Deborah Woodcock, Executive Director of Children's Services
<b>Report Reference No:</b>	To be provided by Democratic Services
<b>Ward(s) Affected:</b>	All Wards

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### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1.** This report sets out the performance for corporate parenting for quarter 1 of 2022-23 (1 April 2022 – 30 June 2022). The Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to note the performance for quarter 1 and to provide support and challenge in relation to performance for children and young people.

### **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1** This report provides an overview of quarter 1 performance for children and families services for the relevant indicators for the reporting year of 2022-23

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1.** The Corporate Parenting Committee is asked to:
- 3.2** note the performance of children's services for quarter 1.
- 3.3** provide scrutiny in relation to performance of children and families services.

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1.** One of the key areas of focus for the Corporate Parenting Committee is to review performance and scrutinise the effectiveness of services for cared for children and young people and care leavers.

#### **5. Other Options Considered**

- 5.1.** Not applicable

#### **6. Background**

- 6.1.** This quarterly report provides the committee with an overview of performance across Cared For Children and Care Leaver's service. This report relates to quarter 1 of 2022-23 (1 April 2022 – 30 June 2022).

- 6.2.** The following indicators have been highlighted for consideration

#### **7. Briefing information**

- 7.1** Cheshire East Council were responsible for 522 cared for children at the end of quarter 1. The cared for children population changes daily as children enter and leave care. Children cease to be cared for due to several reasons, these include turning 18, returning to their birth family, adoption, and special guardianship. The latest comparable data we have across the region shows that Cheshire East's rate is in line with the latest available national average which is 67 per 10,000 but is slightly above that of our statistical neighbours.

- 7.2** We have seen an increase in the number of children entering care from 132 in 2020/21 to 160 in 2021/22. Much of this increase relates to UASC becoming cared for. We have recently seen an increase in young people who have been placed in hotels by the Home Office, who subsequently challenge their age and are then accommodated if they are assessed as being under 18. We are constantly monitoring the numbers of Cared For children and looking at ways to ensure that we are reviewing plans for children to achieve permanence at the earliest opportunity. Positively, the number of children where care orders have been discharged is increasing; so far this year (21.09 2022) we have discharged care orders for 11 children and there are several applications currently before the court so we are hopeful that this number will increase. Overall last year, we achieved 17 discharges of care orders and 7 the year before. The progress we are making represents a positive picture.

- 7.3** However, we are not making as much progress as we would like with discharging Care Orders, this is primarily due to staff shortages across the service and the need to prioritise our statutory work. We are actively looking at ways to increase our staffing, but this is proving difficult. At the

time of writing this report, the Cared For Service has 9.5 social work vacancies out of an establishment of 24. Capacity within the service is therefore at a critical level. As an interim measure we are seeking support from other areas to ensure that we are able to meet statutory obligations.

- 7.4** The timeliness of cared for children's reviews continues to be good and in Q1, this was at 94%. Additionally, 95% of children were involved in their reviews. It is important that children and young people are involved in their plan, and we are always looking at how we can develop and improve their participation.
- 7.5** Q1 data shows an increase in children placed with in-house foster carers (123 in Q1 compared to 120 in Q4). This is positive and there are plans in place to increase recruitment of foster carers, which will mean that we can place more of our children with Cheshire East foster carers. Generally, we want children to remain local and within Cheshire East where possible. For some children, they may live out of the area because they need a specialist placement, or they want to be close to birth family who have moved away. Arrangements for any child who lives at a distance are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure this remains appropriate.
- 7.6** We had worked hard to reduce the number of children in residential care but recently we have seen an increase in children being placed in residential care. In Q1, the number of children living in residential care is 36 and was 31 at the end of Q4. We remain committed to ensuring that children have the opportunity of living within a family wherever possible and believe that the increase is largely due to the national shortage of foster placements available to children. Currently we have 6.73% of our cared for children living in residential care, the national average is 10%.
- 7.7** The number of adoptions continues to slowly increase with 5 children adopted so far this year and another 10 living in their adoption placements. Of the 5 children legally adopted so far this year, unfortunately the number of days from entering care to moving into placement with an adoptive family is skewed by a small number of children where there has been delay. For example, one was 1,207 days, which will have impacted our average number of days for the 5 adoptions to date. Locally and nationally the timescales for placing children within their adoptive families is monitored to avoid unnecessary delay for children. Pre-pandemic Cheshire East were in a strong position in relation to timeliness, above the regional and national average. However, this has been significantly impacted because of the complexities involved in facilitating transitions and the impact of Covid-19. For those children where delay was experienced, their individual circumstances are well understood, and we continue to scrutinise planning to ensure that children do not experience unnecessary delay.

- 7.8** The number of 16 to 18-year-old young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) is low. We have a dedicated 16 plus advisor within the virtual school, and this reflects the proactive work to keep our young people in education or support them into employment and training.
- 7.9** The number of 16 to 18-year-old young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is low. We have a dedicated 16 plus advisor within the virtual school, and this reflects the proactive work to keep our young people in education or support them into employment and training.
- 7.10** The NEET data for our 19 to 21-year-old young people shows that 46% of this cohort are not engaged in education, employment, or training. The national average for 2020/21 was 48% with statistical neighbours being 47%. We are looking closely at this data and the circumstances for these young adults which include pregnancy, parenting or illness, but are not exclusive to this.
- 7.11** The next NEET programme is currently being planned and will run for 12 weeks during the autumn/winter term. This is a good way of engaging our young people and it is successful as a pathway to get young people involved in a range of activities and into education, employment, or training. Previous NEET programmes have seen real successes for our young people.
- 7.12** Whilst most health assessments are being requested within 48 hours of children entering care (71% in Q1) there has been a decline from 84% in Q4. This is likely to be an impact of significant staff shortages, particularly social workers across all service areas. This data will be discussed with health colleagues to see what is causing delay so we can truly understand the full picture and manage this to ensure that the timeliness of health assessments for children improves.
- 7.13** Q1 data shows a decline in children seeing a dentist to 37% from 51% in Q4. We are working to try and look at how we capture this data as we believe these figures are not a true representation. One of the things we are doing is adding in a mandatory question within the Statutory review process so that we have a better and more accurate picture of this information.
- 7.14** Q1 data shows that 96% of our care leavers are in appropriate accommodation. This is not 100% because we have a small number of young people who are in prison, and this is never recorded as being appropriate. This is currently less than five and as such the number is suppressed in line with DfE guidelines. Nationally the latest available data

reported 95% of care leavers in suitable accommodation with 3% being in custody; the other main reasons for accommodation being classed as unsuitable is emergency accommodation or homelessness.

- 7.15** 81% of care leavers have up-to-date pathway plans and 53% of care leavers had their plans reviewed within timescales. We are aware that there are issues in respect of pathway plans being reviewed and we are changing the way in which pathway plans are reviewed. This work will now transfer to the safeguarding service to ensure that our care leavers have their pathway plans reviewed in a timelier way and to allow for external scrutiny.

## **8. Consultation and Engagement**

- 8.1.** Not applicable.

## **9. Implications**

### **10. Legal**

- 10.1.** There are no direct legal implications.

### **11. Finance**

- 11.1** Although there are no direct financial implications or changes to the MTFS as a result of this briefing paper, performance measures may be used as an indicator of budget pressures at a service level

### **12. Policy**

- 12.1** There are no direct policy implications.

### **13. Equality**

- 13.1** Members may want to use the information from the performance indicators to ensure that services are targeted at more vulnerable children and young people.

### **14. Human Resources**

- 14.1** There are no direct human resources implications.

### **15. Risk Management**

**15.1** There are risks associated with some performance measures, e.g. increases in demand and timeliness of services.

**16. Rural Communities**

**16.1** There are no direct implications for rural communities.

**17. Children and Young People/Cared for Children**

**17.1** Performance reports enable members to identify areas of good performance and areas for improvement in relation to children and young people, including cared for children.

**18. Public Health**

**18.1** There are no direct implications for public health.

**19. Climate Change**

**19.1** This report does not impact on climate change.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Annemarie Parker
Appendices:	Corporate Parenting Score Card Q1
Background Papers:	None