

Report from Cambridgeshire Foster Carers' Association

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 13 January 2021

From: Assistant Director Nicola Curley, Children and Safeguarding

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: N/A

Key decision: No

Outcome: To update the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee on activity undertaken by the Cambridgeshire Foster Carers Association (CFCA) to date.

Report on the outcome of the education survey completed by Cambridgeshire Foster Carers Association in collaboration with the Virtual School in December 2020.

Recommendation: The Sub-Committee is recommended to:

- a) Note the comments from foster carers in regards to their views and experiences of the education provided to the children in care they look after.
- b) Note the comments from foster carers in regards to their interactions with and support from the Virtual School.
- c) Note the continuing collaborative work from children's services, foster carers and the Virtual School to improve educational outcomes for children in care.

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1. Summary

- 1.1 The report attached at Appendix 1 begins with an overview of the Cambridgeshire Foster Carers' Association (CFCA), which was formed in 2018. Working closely with the Fostering Service, the CFCA is a voluntary organisation run by Cambridgeshire County Council foster carers for Cambridgeshire's foster carers with the aim of improving the care and wellbeing of the children and young people who are looked after by the council.
- 1.2 The CFCA held its Annual General Meeting on 10th November 2020. During the meeting it was confirmed that Mr John Priest would be stepping down as Chair and a new Chair was elected. The Fostering Service would like to thank Mr Priest for his support and commitment over the last two years and also welcome Mr Kevin Arrowsmith as the new CFCA chair. In addition, Ms Suzi Jackson was appointed as Secretary and Ms Anna Williamson appointed as Treasurer for a further year.
- 1.3 Within the CFCA Education Review Survey included at Appendix 1, foster carers were asked to comment on their experience of working with schools, the support for children in care who have additional educational needs, the support foster carers receive from the Virtual School and their experience of being involved with the Personal Educational Plan (PEP) process.

2. Background

- 1.1 The Cambridgeshire Foster Carers Association Education survey report has been completed in line with the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee work plan for 2020/2021.
- 1.2 Officers were asked to consider how to best ensure synergy in looking into and responding to issues raised by children and young people and by the CFCA. The CFCA education survey was completed to support the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee theme of 'Education' and therefore facilitates more effective participation of foster carers.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 The survey was responded to by 38 foster carers, and provides foster carer views in regards to the strengths and areas for development for all services who support children in care to consider.
- 2.2 The survey report concludes with four key findings based on responses received:
 1. Foster carers need to receive the children's completed Personal Education Plans in a timelier way and have their contribution noted.
 2. Communication between the Virtual School and foster carers can be further supported by the CFCA and the Virtual School for example, by offering question and answer sessions.
 3. Supported by the CFCA, foster carers to be provided with on line training materials from the Virtual School.
 4. The fostering service to review the training available to foster carers to ensure alignment with therapeutic behaviour management techniques used in schools.

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 A good quality of life for everyone

The following bullet point sets out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- The findings of the CFCA survey enables more direct and meaningful engagement for the Sub-Committee with Cambridgeshire's Foster Carers and so will enhance its ability to contribute to the corporate priority.

3.2 Thriving places for people to live

There are no significant implications within this category.

3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children

The following bullet point sets out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- Listening to the views of foster carers will support the Sub-Committee in its goal of repairing and enhancing new best starts for our most vulnerable children and young adults.

3.4 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050

There are no significant implications within this category

4. Significant Implications

4.1 Resource Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.7 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

5. Source documents

5.1 None

6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix 1: Report by Cambridgeshire Foster Carers' Association.

6.2 An accessible version of Appendix 1 is available on request from Fiona van den Hoult at Fiona.vandenhout@cambridgeshire.gov.uk .