

Corporate Parenting Board
11 January 2022

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2024.

Executive Summary:

The council works in partnership with others to support families who need support in the community to care for their children within their family and family network. For some children this is not possible and they become children in our care.

Every councillor and officer within a council has a statutory responsibility to make good decisions for children in our care and care experienced young people (also known as care leavers) as a parent would for their own child, in this context councillors are Corporate Parents.

The corporate parenting strategy sets out our ambition for our children in care and care experienced young people, and how this will be achieved. The Corporate Parenting Action Plan will make the ambition in the strategy a reality.

Reason for bringing to the Corporate Parenting Board:

To agree the Board's shared partnership ambition for our children in care and care experienced young people

To support Walsall Council in meeting its legal responsibilities in regard to our children in care and care experience young people.

Recommendations:

1. The Board committee notes the final draft of the Corporate Parenting Strategy
2. The Board members are asked to:
 - Comment on the draft Corporate Parenting Strategy ("the strategy")
 - Agree the priority areas and action plan for the delivery of the strategy
 - Agree that the delivery of the strategy is monitored through the work plan of the Board.

Background papers:

None

Resource and legal considerations:

There are no resource implications associated with the development of the strategy.

Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Children have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well.
- People have increased independence, improved health and can positively contribute to their communities.

Citizen impact:

The services and the improvements play a key role in the quality of life and outcomes for the children, young people and families of Walsall.

The Council and its partners as Corporate Parents make critical contributions to improve outcomes.

Environmental impact:

There are no environmental implications associated with the development of the strategy.

Performance management:

The delivery of the strategy will be monitored through the Corporate Parenting Board and the Directorate Management Team.

Reducing inequalities:

Successful delivery of a strategy to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers will have a significantly positive impact on the outcomes of one of the most vulnerable groups.

Consultation:

The children in care council is one of the key forums through which services for children in care and care leavers seek to consult on service delivery and where children and young people are able to shape and influence the parenting they receive at every level.

Contact Officer:

Full Name: Jivan Sembi



01922 658412/0555

Jivan.sembi@Walsall.gov.uk

Report: Corporate Parenting Strategy

1.0 Background

- 1.1** The previous Council Corporate Parenting Strategy was published in 2017, following the approval of the Corporate Parenting Board. Building on the foundations of the existing strategies vision, aims and priorities, the council has developed a proposed corporate parenting strategy which aligns with the Corporate Plan and the changed legislative and national policy context.
- 1.2** In addition to the work done previously to understand the views and experiences of our children and young people, the development of the new strategy seeks to understand and respond to our intelligence on the significant impact of Covid-19 Pandemic the health, wellbeing, educational and social development of our children and young people.

Policy, Legislative & Regulatory Context

- 1.3** Since the publication of the last strategy there has been a significant shift in the national policy context in relation to corporate parenting. This has included changes set out within the DfE Strategy Keep on Caring 2016, the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the 2018 Statutory Guidance. Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers and the revised Ofsted Framework the Inspection of Local Authority Children Services Framework, the ILACs, published in 2018.
- 1.4** A primary intention of Keep on Caring was to “make corporate parenting everyone’s responsibility” that was to be delivered by the introduction of corporate parenting principles. These principles require all departments within a local authority to recognise their role as corporate parents, encouraging them to look at the services and support that they provide through the lens of what a reasonable parent would do to support their own children. These principles were subsequently set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017.
- 1.5** The Children and Social Work Act 2017, and the 2018 guidance defines, for the first time in law, the role of corporate parents, in addition to expanding and extending support for care leavers, for example through the publication of a ‘local offer for care leavers’ and making personal advisers available for care leavers up to the age of 25.
- 1.6** Central to the strategy are 7 principles, set out below. The new strategy sets out to embed these principles within the council and beyond with our Partners and broader community. The principles underpin everything we will do and explain how the collective ambitions for children and young people will be made real.

“In order to thrive, children and young people have certain key needs that good parents generally meet. The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows:

- *to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing, of those children and young people*
- *to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings*

- *to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people*
- *to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners*
- *to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people*
- *for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and*
- *to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.”*

1.9 The new strategy adopts the wider vision of the council for Children and Young People:

- Children have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well.
- People have increased independence, improved health and can positively contribute to their communities

1.10 To achieve this vision we propose 5 key strategic priorities

Our priorities respond directly to Our Promises, a list of commitments to children and care leavers, developed and agreed by the young people themselves and endorsed by the Corporate Parenting Board.

1. Safety and Permanency
 - a. *All of our children and young people will be safe from harm, with stability provided through secure homes and excellent carers.*
2. Mental and Physical Health and Wellbeing
 - a. *We will educate our young people to encourage a happy and healthy lifestyle, making sure that professionals work together to ensure that all their health needs are met.*
3. Education and Employment
 - a. *We will champion our young people and help them succeed in education and training, supporting lifelong learning and the pursuit of their interests.*
4. Transitions and Independence
 - a. *Our young people will be prepared for the world of work and supported to become active citizens when they leave care. They will be prepared for independence in the best way possible.*
5. Influence and Involvement
 - a. *Children and young people are at the heart of service design, delivery and evaluation*

1.11 At the core of the strategy is our intention to drive the corporate parenting principles and delivery for our children, young people, and young adults into all areas of the Council and or Partners, and to unashamedly leverage all opportunities to improve

the life chances of children in care and those who have left care. It reflects the high aspirations that we have and what can be achieved by working with Partners.

It is an aspirational strategy, which will be delivered through the development of a delivery plan and by championing this work across the whole Council and with the wider community of Partners across Walsall who can make a difference to the lives of our children and young people.

1.12 Delivery Plan

The following delivery plan sets out the timescale for the completion and publication of the strategy

Corporate Parenting Board	January 2022
Further Consultation & Engagement with children in care and care leavers	February 2022
Publication	March 2022
Delivery Plan	2022/2025

1.13 Summary

Walsall has a significant record of investment in services for our children in care and our care leavers, we have a partnership that is committed to achieving improved outcomes for our children. The draft strategy sets a high ambition for how we can continue to build on that investment and see meaningful transformation in the life chances of the most vulnerable in society.