

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

3 September, 2018 at 6.00pm at the Council House, Walsall

Committee Members Present

Councillor Wilson (Chair)
Councillor Jukes (Vice Chair)
Councillor Ferguson
Councillor M. Nazir

Officers Present

Sally Rowe	Executive Director – Children’s Services
Debbie Carter	Assistant Director – Social Care and Safeguarding
Elizabeth Gosling	Interim Group Manager - Provider Services
Jivan Sembi	Group Manager – Corporate Parenting
Michelle Cummings	Children and Young Persons Champion (Participation and Engagement)
Helena Kucharczyk	Head of Service – Quality Assurance & Performance Information
Neil Picken	Senior Democratic Services Officer

9/18 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Nawaz and Neville, Jackie Haden (Walsall CCG) and Sarah Shingler (Walsall CCG).

10/18 Substitution

There were no substitutions.

11/18 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest or party whips.

12/18 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to consider in private session.

13/18 **Young People Engagement**

The report of the Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) [annexed] was considered by the Board.

The Chair highlighted that a key role of the Board was to hear young people's views and take action when required. He thanked the Young Persons Champion engaging young people to inform the report.

The Chair requested that future reports include an appendix to monitor the issues raised by young people. He asked the Young Persons Champion to feedback comments from the Board to young people to start an open and transparent conversation.

The Board then considered each of the seven issues raised by young people and asked a number of questions thereon.

Issue one - apprenticeships and work experience for young people with disabilities

The Board sought clarity on the support offered to young people to find a suitable education provider. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) explained that the young person that had raised the query had complex disabilities and required personal care. This meant that local colleges were unable to facilitate a placement safely. The young person was awaiting an assessment with a different college and officers were trying to find alternatives that would suit the individual's requirements. Further clarity would be available following the assessment that would take place w/c 10 September, 2018. The Chair questioned why preparation work hadn't been undertaken earlier as the academic year had now started. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) advised that work was undertaken sequentially rather than in parallel and agreed to report this to services to ensure that planning is undertaken earlier in future. The Chair supported this suggestion and emphasised the need to plan ahead to prevent the issue from happening again. The Chair requested an update to the next meeting of the Board and confirmed that if a college could not be found a contingency plan was required to assist the young person in achieving their aspirations.

Further discussion followed on the number of young people in care that were currently in apprenticeships. Officers advised that there were 12 individuals in apprenticeships and a further four were being prepared to start. This was a great improvement as in December, 2017 there was only one. The Board recognised the work of the Impact Project as a key driver in developing apprenticeships. The Chair questioned whether young people with disabilities had been placed and asked for clarity as to how many. Officers confirmed that young people with disabilities had been placed and agreed to circulate the exact number to the Board after the meeting.

Issue two - supporting care leavers into employment and training when they have a conviction.

The Board asked how many young people with convictions had been placed. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) agreed to circulate this information after the meeting. The Board sought clarity as to how young people with convictions had been supported. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) explained that specialists such as Talent Match provided assistance in conjunction with probation officers. A few were with the council's apprenticeship scheme.

A member of the Board asked whether young people in care were prosecuted should they cause damage to a residential home. Officers were clear that young people in care were not criminalised by the Council and so instances such as a broken windows on council premises would not be reported.

The Chair asked how developed the relationship with local employers was and whether a larger pool was required to support care leavers into employment. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) advised that work was required internally to develop the offer to young people noting that colleagues in the health service could also assist. The (Assistant Director – Social Care and Safeguarding) explained that the Board could assist by raising the profile and importance of apprenticeships with Partners and monitoring progress via the education work stream. The Chair suggested that he write to Partners, on behalf of the Board, to explain the importance of apprenticeships and encourage Partners to participate.

Issue 3 – young people would like a ‘drop in’ specifically for benefits advice and guidance.

The Chair noted that within the report there appeared to be a number of ways young people could access advice. However, he asked whether there was a communication issue as young people had still raised it as an issue. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) explained that young people would like for a drop in at The Hub but there wasn't sufficient footfall to transfer an officer from the Civic. She explained that the existing process was for young people to raise issues with their Personal Advisor who would then investigate the matter with relevant staff before responding to the young person.

The Chair stated that the Board would monitor this issue as it was important that young people were able to access the support they require. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) stated that she would revisit this issue with young people and confirmed that a drop in may be established in future subject to there being sufficient demand. The Chair requested an update to the next meeting of the Board.

Issue 4 – Young people wish for all professionals to attend The Respect Programme

The Chair reiterated the commitment of the Board to attend the Total Respect programme. The Executive Director – Children's Services advised that a condensed version may be more appropriate for other members of the council. The Chair agreed that it was important for all members of the council to attend the course and agreed to write to all members to encourage attendance.

Issue 5 – Improving Housing Associations understanding of 'life as a care leaver'

The Board were advised that officers across the council worked hard to ensure that care leavers were supported in securing and retaining tenancies and that, when issues arise, they are dealt with in the best way possible for the young person.

The Assistant Director (Social Care and Safeguarding) advised that a joint agreement between Children's Services and Money, Home Job was being signed off which would also assist the process. The Chair requested that the joint agreement be circulated to members of the Board.

The Chair sought assurance that discussions took place with housing associations to improve the experience for care leavers. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) advised that the Council had a very good relationship with housing providers that offered a flexible approach when housing care leavers. Care leavers were also given priority on waiting lists.

The Board sought clarity as to the support for young people moving outside the borough. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) explained that if the young person had a support network in the new location the move would be supported. However, each authority would prioritise their own care leavers and so they may not receive the same level of support. In response to a question, officers confirmed that should a young person move out of the borough they would not receive an exemption from council tax. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) agreed to revisit this matter at the request of the Board.

Issue 6 – Care Leavers feeling alone and isolated when approaching adulthood and moving into independence.

The Board noted the support offered to young people as they move to independence as detailed within the report. The Chair sought clarity as to the hours Personal Advisors (PA's) are available. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) advised that the PA's worked from 9 to 5 p.m. but often provided support during the evenings or at weekends. An extended service was being considered but a decision had not yet been made. A PA did attend New Belongings every fortnight and was available until 7.30 p.m. The Assistant Director (Social Care and Safeguarding) explained that PA's

now had smartphones and a number of other methods of keeping in touch and that this approach was being further developed.

The Chair welcomed the new initiatives but stated that he was concerned that young people still felt isolated out of office hours. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) advised that PA's and social workers should assist individuals to develop networks with friends and relatives to provide support when PA's are unavailable to create resilience. The Assistant Director (Social Care and Safeguarding) advised that there was a duty service available for emergencies. In addition, a new initiative 'Lifelong Links' was being explored to add value to the existing offer.

The Chair requested that a report be submitted to the next Board meeting providing examples of how other authorities support young people in care out of hours.

Issue 7 – Young people would like a budget to participate in new experiences to enhance self-esteem and confidence.

The Assistant Director (Social Care and Safeguarding) explained that a wide range of support was available to assist young people with activities. This was funded via several budgets. Ofsted had recognised the fact that young people can access a wide range of activities.

The Chair asked whether there was a single budget for young people to access to which officers advised that it was being considered. The Chair stated that the Board required clarity as to the funding available to young people for activities to the next meeting.

Resolved

1. That the Group Manager (Corporate Parenting):-

- Includes an appendix in future reports to monitor young people's views;
- Provides an update to the Board in November in relation to the individual with disabilities seeking a college placement;
- Circulates a breakdown of apprenticeships placements (including those with disabilities) to the Board;
- Notifies relevant services of the importance of planning in parallel rather than sequentially for young people as they transition into further education or apprenticeships;
- Circulates the total number of care leavers with criminal records that have been supported into training and employment;
- Provides an update on the provision/need for a benefits advice/drop in service to the meeting in November, 2018;
- Circulates the joint agreement between Children's Services and Money, Home Job to the Board;

- Revisits the issue of council tax for care leavers moving out of borough and reports the outcome to the meeting in November, 2018.
- Provides a report setting out examples of how other authorities support young people in care out of hours to the November meeting.

2. That the Chair:-

- Writes a letter to Partners to explain the importance of apprenticeships for care leavers and encourages Partners to participate;
- Writes a letter to all members to encourage attendance at Total Respect Training.

14/18 **The Draft Local Offer**

The report of the Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) [annexed] was considered by the Board.

The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) advised that a survey of 180 care leavers was underway with 50 responses. Consultation would end on 7th September, 2018 and a number of focus groups would then be held to capture further feedback on the draft local offer.

A member of the Board queried whether the revised offer would address issues such as funding council tax for care leavers moving out of borough and enabling leisure cards to be used for fitness classes. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) explained that the current offer was in line with other authorities and in some instances exceeded them.

The Chair referred members to paragraph 1.1 of the report and reminded the Board that when considering matters they should ask themselves 'would this be good enough for my child'. He also asked whether any themes had emerged from consultation to date. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) advised that analysis had not yet been undertaken but a report would be submitted to the Board in due course.

The Board sought clarity on the number of cases held by PA's. Officers confirmed that the average was 25 but that one or two had 26. The Chair, whilst recognising that some cases were more complex than others, stated that if the authority had committed to caseloads of 25 then this should be adhered to. The Assistant Director (Social Care and Safeguarding) advised that a reconfiguration of PA's was being considered.

In relation to pathway planning, the Chair asked when programme would be embedded. The Assistant Director (Social Care and Safeguarding) advised that it was expected to be embedded by April, 2019.

In relation to financial support, the Chair asked whether any additional support was offered to care leavers if they had to travel for work. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) explained that in extraordinary situations this would be considered but it was not routinely offered. The Chair asked for clarity as to whether this was in the local offer to which officers advised that it was a tailored approach and not a standard offer.

In relation to housing, the Board noted that the choice of accommodation and supported accommodation within the borough for care leavers could be improved and asked how this would be achieved. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) advised that this was part of a review but more family based accommodation would be advantageous.

In relation to Mental Health services, the Chair requested an update from the CCG on their contribution to the Local Offer for care leavers that formed part of the Health work stream.

With regard to access to leisure services the Board sought clarity as to the take up rate of the leisure card and whether the pass covered care leavers children to which Officers agreed to check and update the Board.

In relation to respect and influence, the Chair sought the Boards agreement to include 'care leavers and children in care are encouraged to attend and contribute to the Corporate Parenting Board'. He also requested that the 'Meet the Corporate Parenting Board' session be arranged in advance of the November meeting.

Resolved

1. That the CCG provide an update on their contribution to the draft Local Offer for care leavers to the meeting in November, 2018;
2. That statistics on take up of the Leisure Card and confirmation on whether the pass covers care leavers children be circulated to the Board;
3. That the Local Offer under heading 'respect and influence' include the words 'care leavers and children in care are encouraged to attend and contribute to the Corporate Parenting Board'.
4. That the Senior Democratic Services Officer liaise with Children's Services to arrange a 'meet the corporate parenting board' event;

15/18 Regional Adoption Agency

The report of the Interim Group Manager (Provider Services) [annexed] was considered by the Board.

outlined the report which set out the development of a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA). She confirmed that it was a requirement of central government that all Local Authorities will be part of a regional adoption agency by 2020.

The Board noted that the transition would have implications for membership of the Adoption Panel and that a decision on this matter had not yet been reached.

In terms of risks, the Interim Group Manager (Provider Services) explained that the RAA needed to ensure that it was financially viable and ensure that sufficient adopters were recruited. As the RAA included a number of authorities, practices including adopters allowances needed to be aligned. To assist this process cross border auditing was being undertaken.

A member of the Board sought assurance that support would still be provided to parents post adoption. The Interim Group Manager (Provider Services) advised that work was undertaken to provide support.

The Chair requested further detail on the risks of the RAA. The Interim Group Manager (Provider Services) advised that the RAA would need to recruit adopters. Failing to do so would mean they would have to buy them with each costing up to 30k. This would put financial strain on the RAA.

The Chair asked how the move to a RAA would improve lives of young people. The Interim Group Manager (Provider Services) stated that the RAA should reduce timeframes for adoption. It would also provide stability for adopters as all four authorities would combine resources to provide a well-managed service. This would require strong leadership and strategic commissioning to keep the RAA on track.

Resolved

That the update on the Regional Adoption Agency be noted.

16/18 Performance Monitoring

The Head of Service (Quality Assurance & Performance Information) provided an overview of the corporate parenting performance scorecard advising that the format would be amended for future meetings.

In relation to LAC11 which relates to the number of children placed at home that are subject to a full care order, a member asked why this had increased. The Assistant Director (Social Care and Safeguarding) advised that this was a national issue. Recent case law had been released that may assist the authority in future to reduce this number.

The Board requested an update on health statistics and were advised that capacity had been increased with the appointment of a further LAC designated nurse.

The Chair referred to CL1 which relates to the percentage of care leavers not in suitable accommodation and queried why this was 10%. Officers

advised that these individuals would be in custody which was classed as unsuitable accommodation. The Chair asked that this be specified in future reports.

Resolved

That future scorecards be updated to include the percentage of young people in custody.

17/18 Work Programme

Members considered the development of a work programme for the 2018/19 municipal year.

Resolved

That the Chair, in consultation with officers and taking into account requests from Members of the Board, sets future agendas and provides an updated work programme to each meeting.

18/18 Date of next meeting

The Board noted that the next meeting would be held on 6th November, 2018 at 6.00 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 7.25 p.m.

Signed:

Date: