

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

6 November, 2018 at 6.00pm at the Council House, Walsall

Committee Members Present

Councillor Wilson (Chair)
Councillor Jukes (Vice Chair)
Councillor Ferguson
Councillor Neville

Officers Present

Sally Rowe	Executive Director – Children’s Services
Debbie Carter	Assistant Director – Social Care and Safeguarding
Elizabeth Gosling	Group Manager - Provider Services
Jivan Sembi	Group Manager – Corporate Parenting
Michelle Cummings	Children and Young Persons Champion (Participation and Engagement)
Lee Allen	Performance Officer
Sarah Shingler	Chief Nursing Officer/Director of Quality - Walsall CCG
Jackie Haden	Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children and Children Looked After - Walsall CCG
Neil Picken	Senior Democratic Services Officer

19/18 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Kudhail, Nawaz and M. Nazir.

20/18 Minutes

A copy of the minutes of the meetings held on 3rd September, 2018, were submitted:-

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the minutes of the meetings held on 3rd September, 2018, a copy having previously been circulated to each Member of the Board, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

21/18 Substitution

There were no substitutions.

22/18 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest or party whips.

23/18 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to consider in private session.

24/18 Young People Engagement

The report of the Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) [annexed] was considered by the Board alongside a further report entitled 'Local Offer for Care Leavers Strategy Survey' which had been circulated at the request of the Chair.

The Chair noted that there were no new items raised by young people for the Board to consider. The Children's Champion advised that she had consulted young people and that Council 4 Kids was being established which would then provide a mechanism to provide feedback to the Board.

Debate ensued as to the most effective way of managing issues raised by young people. The Executive Director (Children's Services) suggested that the Board could focus on themes such as housing rather than individual concerns noting that there were other processes, such as pathway plans, to address such matters.

The Chair accepted the point made with regard to the broader role of the Board and supported the work undertaken to strengthen Council4Kids. However, he also stressed the importance for the Board to be aware of the concerns of young people and, where possible, put things in place to assist them. The Assistant Director (Social Care and Safeguarding) suggested that the Board meet with Council4Kids bi annually to develop relationships and explore themed discussions at each meeting. The Chair agreed that this would be useful but stated that the pace of the Board should not be lost.

Discussion then moved to the 'Local Offer'. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) confirmed that whilst Walsall's offer was 'on par' with other Local Authorities officers were keen to go the extra mile. The Board were advised that some areas such as the transition process for 16/17 year olds had been improved and that Personal Advisors were now allocated to individuals.

With regard to Council Tax, the Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) confirmed that care leavers in Walsall benefited from council tax reductions. However, this did not apply to the 84 young people living out of Borough. The Chair queried why this was not the case to which the Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) advised that regionally and nationally the offer was not universal and there didn't appear to be an appetite to make it mandatory for councils to offer council tax reductions to young people living outside their local authority boundaries. Discussions were taking place as to how better to support care leavers from Walsall living outside of the Borough.

The Chair requested that clarity as to the legalities of the council tax discount scheme and how it is applied be considered at a future meeting of the Board. He stressed that the authority should consider supporting those young people moving out of Borough as they were still the Council's responsibility.

The Board moved on to discuss 'Staying Put' arrangements noting there were 23 in Walsall. The Assistant Director (Social Care and Safeguarding) advised that 'Staying Put' arrangements were well established and Walsall had a good take up. The Board noted the important role of Walsall foster carers and the fantastic work they carry out. The Group Manager - Provider Services explained that there was a celebration event to recognise the work carried out by Walsall Foster Carers. This was well attended and organised jointly by the council and Walsall Foster Care Association.

The Board then considered the actions within the report:-

Action 1 – Include an appendix to monitor young peoples views and include feedback on issues raised.

The Board recognised that once developed, Council4Kids would take over the work of the respect and influence operational work stream. However, the Board agreed that until such time, feedback from young people be included as a standing item at future meetings of the Board;

Action 2 - Provide an update in relation to the individual with disabilities seeking a college placement

The Board noted the actions undertaken to assist the individual.

Action 3 – Provide an update on the provision/need for a benefits advice/drop in service to the meeting

The Board were pleased that a drop in service was to be piloted for one month and requested feedback on the service in the new municipal year.

Action 4 – Revisit the issue of Council Tax for care leavers moving out of the borough and report the outcome.

As previously discussed, the Board reiterated the need for clarity as to the legal context as to the council tax discount scheme. In addition, the Chair

stated that he would write to Walsall MP's and the West Midlands Mayor to ascertain their views. He also asked for a report to a future meeting as to how much it would cost to assist young people living out of borough with their council tax payments.

A member of the Board queried whether Foster Carers received Council Tax reductions. The Group Manager (Provider Services) explained that this would be considered as part of the overall package for foster carers. A foster care friendly report would be produced and submitted to the Board in due course.

Action 5 - Out of Hours support to Care Leavers

The Board noted that bespoke support was available for young people dependent on their needs and that networks were an important way for young people to help each other. The Board were particularly pleased to hear that personal advisors would also assist care leavers when they moved to university. Overall, the Board were pleased with the level of support offered to young people.

Resolved

1. That Young People Engagement remains a standing agenda item;
2. That the legalities of the council tax reduction scheme and its application to care leavers (both in and out of borough) be considered at a future meeting of the Board.
3. That a report be submitted to a future meeting setting out the potential costs to assist young people living out of borough with their council tax payments
4. That an update on the pilot benefits drop in service be provided in the new municipal year;

25/18 Health Update

The report of the designated nurse for safeguarding children and children looked after [annexed] was considered by the Board.

In presenting the report, the designated nurse advised that health advisor for the transition and leaving care service had returned to work. They would be offering health assessments at the Transition and Leaving Care Hub 1 – 2 days a week.

In relation to the Children Looked After Monitoring and Operational Group, the board were advised that a more integrated approach was being considered and that the terms of reference were being revisited as a result. The Chief Nursing Officer/Director of Quality (Walsall CCG) stated that there was a need to 'join up the dots' and supported joint working.

Discussion ensued in relation to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. The board noted that a joint review was underway by the CCG and council to address longstanding issues and improve services.

Members questioned the waiting time to access the FLASH noting that 12 weeks seemed a long period to wait. The Board were advised that the service had a high 'did not attend' rate and experienced an increase in demand without funding for additional resources. The Board noted that a review was underway by an independent consultant together with the Council and requested the outcome of the review to be submitted to a future meeting of the Board. In doing so, the Board commented that it was positive that Walsall had appointed a designated Looked After Children Nurse

The Assistant Director (Social Care and Safeguarding) advised that significant improvements had been made which were expected to continue to improve.

Resolved

That the review of FLASH be reported to a future meeting of the Board.

26/18 Fostering and Adoption Annual Reports

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

When considering foster care recruitment, the Board noted the work undertaken in relation to marketing activity and supported the moves to improve the authority's presence on social media. The Group Manager (Provider Services) stated that it was unlikely that the target for recruiting foster carers would be achieved but confirmed that the council were committed to continue marketing the local authority's offer and compete with independent agencies. The Assistant Director (Social Care and Safeguarding) explained that a review of fees and allowances had been undertaken and the council's unique selling points such as Mockingbird were advantageous and should be highlighted. The council's offer in respect of training would also be reviewed whilst improving the authority's digital footprint. A consultant had been appointed to assist the council with its digital footprint and train staff to maximise the potential available.

In relation to Mockingbird, Members were advised that people were nominating themselves to become hub carers. The Assistant Director (Social Care and Safeguarding) explained that due to a number of initiatives, the number of looked after children was beginning to reduce.

The Chair sought confirmation that the authority's timescales for approving foster carers was competitive. The Group Manager (Provider Services) explained that timescales were improving and on average the process took

between 6-7 months. She emphasised that all foster carers have to attend 'skills to foster' training prior to be approved.

The Chair enquired as to the impact and effectiveness of the short breaks service and requested that the matter be included on the work programme for further debate at a future meeting. The Group Manager (Provider Services) explained that a review of the service was required to better understand what users requirements and expectations are. Consultation was underway to gain a clearer picture.

The Board focussed its attention on the Adoption Annual Report noting that the number of adopters approved in year had doubled which was good news. The service was strong across a number of areas including harmony allowances, governance and quality of child permanency reports and a positive outcome was expected when the service was next inspected.

The Chair enquired as to whether the gap with regard to statutory reporting on MOSAIC had been solved noting that data was being collected manually when an electronic system was in place. The Group Manager (Provider Services) advised that training was provided to support staff using the MOSAIC system to ensure they were able to navigate the system successfully and improve compliance. The Assistant Director (Social Care and Safeguarding) advised that the issue was exacerbated as there was a high turnover of staff in safeguarding and family support. In addition, work was underway with the regional adoption agency, independent reviewing officer and others as different systems were used which created access issues. This needed to be resolved by April, 2019 and officers assured the board that it would be. The Chair requested an update to the Board in 2019.

Resolved

That the work programme be updated to include 'Short Term Breaks' and 'MOSAIC – Compliance and Access'.

27/18 Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring

The scorecard produced by the Head of Service – Quality Assurance and Performance Information) [annexed] was considered by the Board.

The Board noted that the number of Looked After Children had reduced to 610 and that 459 children were on full care orders. Health assessments were at 89% which was an improvement. The Chair asked whether the data cleansing issues relating to health assessments had been resolved. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) advised that it was the councils data and the system advised officers when a plan had been returned by health colleagues. There was a delay of 1 – 6 week before the plan was returned. However, the figures should continue to improve into the mid 90% range in the next quarter. Officers were due to meet the healthcare trust to revisit the issue to improve performance further but communication was improving.

The Chair stated that whilst the percentage had increased the data was not accurate and this needed to be addressed. Officers advised that the Trust used different systems. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) advised that the best case scenario would be an integrated administration hub with people operating across both systems which would provide real time data. This would require approval by Caldecott guardians.

The Chief Nursing Officer/Director of Quality (Walsall CCG) requested further breakdown in relation to the 11% to which the performance officer agreed to bring a further report to the Board.

Resolved

That the Performance Officer provides further breakdown in relation to the 11% of Healthcare Assessments not undertaken to a future meeting of the Board and add this information into future performance scorecards.

28/18 Ofsted Inspection

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

The Board welcomed the report and formally congratulated the team in children's services for their hard work and determination resulting in a fantastic outcome from Ofsted. These sentiments were echoed by the Executive Director (Children's Services) who acknowledged that it was a great achievement.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

29/18 Work Programme

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

Resolved

That the work programme be noted.

30/18 Date of next meeting

The Board noted that the next meeting would be held on 8th January, 2019 at 6.00 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 8.25 p.m.

Signed:

Date: