

Young People Engagement.

Executive Summary:

The Council4Kids, the “Children in Care Council”, is the forum where Walsall’s looked after children, young people and care leavers are able to shape and influence the parenting and support that they receive. Since the last Corporate Parenting Board on 10th August 2020 young people continued to meet virtually due to Covid 19.

Reason for bringing to the Corporate Parenting Board:

To inform the Corporate Parenting Board about enrichment activities provided for Looked After Children and Care Leavers between since February 2020

Recommendations:

- 1. The Board notes the activity and events of the Children in Care Council***

Background papers:

None

Corporate Parenting Pledges

The Council’s Pledge to Looked After Children have been reviewed and are subject a separate report to the Corporate Parenting Board. The current pledge that is relates to this report is

Your Voice.....Your Influence

- We will make sure you have chances to share your views, wishes and feelings. We promise to listen to you and tell you how your views and feelings are taken into account in making plans.
- We will make sure you know what your rights are on a regular basis and information will be shared with you in a child friendly manner.
- Contact with people who are important to you will be actively promoted and arrangements will clearly take into account your wishes and feelings.
- We will support the Respect group to make sure that looked after children in Walsall have their voices heard. Members of the corporate parenting board will meet with children and young people at least four times a year.

Resource and legal considerations:

The Children in Care Council is supported by the Children’s Champion and Participation Apprentice.

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:

None

Performance management:

The Children's Champion works with children looked after and care experienced young people to ensure that the Council4Kids is rich and engaging forum. Regular reports are provided to the Director of Children's Services and the Corporate Parenting Board.

Reducing inequalities:

The children in care council seeks to secure improvements in the equality of services, which, when achieved will have a positive impact on our most vulnerable children, young people and families

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.

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Report: Young People's Engagement and Children in Care Council

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1** Care experienced Children and Young People have a chance to meet through Walsall's Council4kids forum where they **"Have a SAY"** about the things that really matter in their lives. Children and young people are able to have influence and shape the services and policies which impact on the parenting and support that they receive at every level. The forum enables young people to build friendships peer networks whilst learning new skills. Walsall Children in Care Council has met virtually since March 2020 due to Covid -19 however have not been able to meet as frequently as previously. We are in the planning stages of meeting as a group face to face.

1.2 Digital Technology:

The use of WhatsApp continues to be one of the key mediums that we have been using to communicate with children and families. WhatsApp is now one of many modern technology's chosen methods used with professionals to communicate more effectively with young people. Virtual meetings have been undertaken through Teams and this continues to be successful. Many of our young people are familiar with this medium as this was used during the national lockdown. We have also used Zoom and Skype.

1.3 Key updates since August 2020

1. To further increase engagement and participation of young people a working group has been set up including children's champions from a number of services. Monthly meetings are in place to develop and implement Participation Strategy Plan. An advisory panel of young people who have the expertise and skills to help innovate and improve engagement and participation of children and young people will work alongside the champions and feed into the group to help with the development and the implementation of the new Participation Strategy. The first group of young people will meet 22nd October 2020. Young people will receive incentives for their time and expertise.
2. Shadow board meeting was held on 14th October and young people met with members and officers of the Corporate Parenting Board. The meeting was very lively with many new faces at the meeting. Overall it was a successful meeting.
3. The Creative Arts Competition launched during lockdown saw a good response from our young people, which lead us to extending the closing date giving even more young people the opportunity to participate. We wanted to ensure we didn't miss any of the creativity of our young people. We are currently in the process of going through the entries in preparation for their work to be published. All young people who participated will receive a thank you gift. An update will be given at a later date.
4. Our care experienced young people have been involved in the review of the Children's home to ensure we are delivering the best services for our young people. Young people were spoken to individually giving

their views about their lived experience of what life was like within Children's Home to shape the future service. Young people were able to inform us what worked well, what we could do better and what changes need to be made to ensure young people feel safe and secure

5. Young people continue to be involved in improving the services they access. A review around housing support will be undertaken whereby young people will have the opportunity to share their experience of the support they received to look at what we can do better in shaping the future of the service.
6. It is important that we recruit the best foster carers for our young people as we have great aspirations and ambitions for our young people. We are therefore looking at ways young people can be involved in the selection process to ensure. We will be meeting with managers in the Fostering Service to think about how we can involve young people in the recruitment of Foster Carers.
7. October we welcome Black history month. Black history aims to celebrate the important people and events in the history of African and Caribbean descent. We have shared a selection of inventors in our special edition of the Influencers Newsletter. A quote from a young person ***'I think that learning more about Black History should be mandatory in all schools. I think it is important because it can teach us the roles they had played in our country and eventually end racism'*** MB
8. October see's the celebration of National Care Leavers Week which is an opportunity to showcase and celebrate the success of Care Leavers. 26th -1st Nov. We will be giving Care leavers a special hug in the mug with a personalised message to kick start the celebrations. There will be fun and games, giveaways and challenges, we want to make sure everyone where they can have fun.(Appendix 1)

1.4 Our Meetings:

Over the summer period the meetings were less frequent. Meetings have now resumed and we have welcomed some new members. We are currently talking with young people to explore how we can develop an effective Care Leavers Forum.

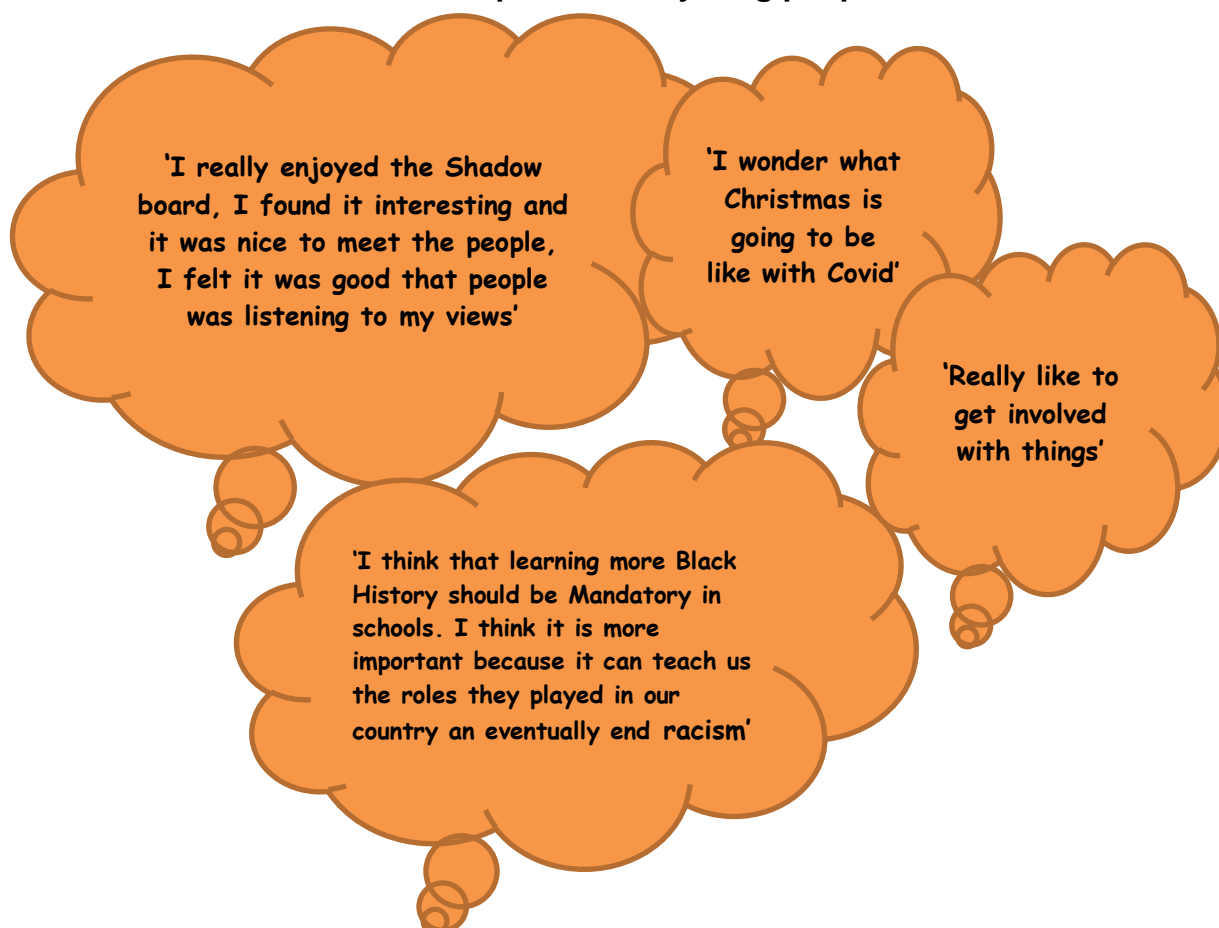
1. Virtual meetings have welcomed new members to the Children in Care Council. We have asked members how they would like to continue to have their meetings, it has been a mixed response of virtual and face to face due to some of the members living out of borough. We are now in the planning stages of looking how we can accommodate the two.
2. Young people welcomed Zoe Morgan the Group manager of Corporate Parenting at one of their meetings. Zoe spoke to the young people about the importance of the Shadow Board for young people. Young people planned and prepared for the Shadow board.

3. At the Shadow Board on 14th October, our young people had the opportunity to have fun with their Corporate Parents with an icebreaker. Everyone got involved using the letter of their first name to describe themselves. We had some fantastic descriptions from young people such as 'Spontaneous, Kind and talented.

During the meeting we shared 'Tales of Lockdown' which then followed with a Q&A session. The session was the young people's opportunity to ask questions and raise issues important to them. Issues around worries about education was raised and the support. Corporate Parents have followed these up with the Head of the Virtual School. Young people recognised the good work of social workers and foster carers and asked that we can praise foster carers and social workers. It was good to hear the work of these professionals be recognised by young people. Councillor Wilson informed the young people that the work of the social workers, personal advisors, carers in children's homes and foster carers is been acknowledged and we have written to all staff thanking them for the work they do.

4. The WhatsApp group remains a quick source of sharing information with young people and for quick responses. We recognise the issues loneliness and isolation brings to some of our young people so the group remains a support mechanism for the group, whilst everyone in the group does not always participate in group discussion there is a reassurance there is always someone there if they need to talk with someone who can understand their issues. Young people share what they do through the day or just a general check to say they are ok.

Some quotes from young people.



1.5 Partnership working

1. We continue to have strong links with the Care Leavers Covenant as one of the trailblazers of Local Authorities who the Covenant work closely with. We will be celebrating Care Leavers week with our closest Partners.
2. Young people have been busy participating in MEL Research commissioned by Walsall Council. The research focused on what life is like for young people living in Walsall. Young people spent time virtually of several meetings with a researcher who asked several questions and set tasks regarding what they like about Walsall, their hopes dreams and fears and what Walsall Council and other organisation are doing to support young people. Findings from the interview will be included in a summary report with recommendations for the council.
3. Young people have had a difficult time in education over the restriction and despite this many still maintained a routine. We felt it was important to recognise their achievements therefore dedicated Edition 4 of the Influencer Newsletter to celebrate achievements. (Appendix 2)
4. We continue to partnership work with Kicster. Some young people have taken up the opportunity to register on site for their virtual youth club, where they can get involved in many virtual activities. For carers who have children between the ages of 10-18 year, Kicster are offered a Level 2 online safety course to help keep our children safe online. In times when many of our young people are spending long hours on line it is important Foster Carers take up this off to update their knowledge on social media and keep our young people safe. (Appendix 3)

1.7 Celebrations and achievements of some of our young people:

- ✓ Children in Care Council would like to thank all our professionals who continued to make a difference in young people's life.
- ✓ Well done to our new members of the CICC, we look forward to more of your input and well done to attending the Shadow Board Meeting virtually. We have dedicated the Influencers Newsletter to recognise the educational achievements of some of our young people.

1.8 Total Respect Training:

Whilst we recognise the importance of Total Respect training which enables professionals to work more effectively with children and young people. As we approach the new norm discussions with Training and Development will be undertaken to explore how this can done and when it is safe to do so.

1.9 Dates for forthcoming events and children in care council meetings.

22nd October

13th November

27th November

11th December

Some dates may be subject to changes and meetings will continue to be held virtually

Appendix 1

The time table of Care Leavers Week Celebrations.

What's in store

- ▶ **Monday 26th October**
- ▶ Log your interest for competitions taking place, 1st and 2nd prizes in all categories
- ▶ Cake decorating
- ▶ Loo roll kick up's
- ▶ Show off your talent
- ▶ **Tuesday 27th October**
- ▶ Virtual movie night
- ▶ **Wednesday 28th October 2020, @ 3-4 & 4-5p**
- ▶ Mid week - Care leavers mastermind challenge
- ▶ Testing the knowledge of our corporate parents
- ▶ **Thursday 29th October @ 1pm**
- ▶ Afternoon at the arboretum
- ▶ Yoga, football challenge or a gentle stroll
- ▶ **Friday 30th October @**
- ▶ End the week with virtual quiz/ WhatsApp games



Appendix 2

Influencers Newsletter Celebration Edition

Appendix 3

Kicsters Leaflet for Carers Online Training to help keep our young people safe

Annual Level 1 Online Safety Course for Parents & Carers (2020-21)

Email Kicsters@kicfm.com or
call 07935754677 to find out
how you can take part in this
FREE online course for parents
living in Walsall with children
aged 10 – 18.



WALSALL FOR ALL

Online Course Units

- ▶ Age Inappropriate Content
- ▶ Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- ▶ Copyright & Ownership
- ▶ Fake News
- ▶ Fake Profiles & Social Bots
- ▶ Hacking
- ▶ Live Streaming
- ▶ Online Bullying
- ▶ Online Challenges
- ▶ Online Fraud
- ▶ Online Gambling & Skin Betting
- ▶ Online Grooming
- ▶ Online Identity
- ▶ Online Relationships
- ▶ Online Reputation
- ▶ Personal Data
- ▶ Pornography
- ▶ Radicalisation, Terrorism and Extremism
- ▶ Screen Addiction
- ▶ Sexting
- ▶ Sexual Harassment & Violence
- ▶ Targeted Adverts & Pop-Ups
- ▶ The Dark Web