

**Title of the Report: 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.

The Council4Kids aims to give children and young people a chance to have a say about the things that really matter in their lives and influence the council’s strategies for those in or who have recently left care.

***Reason for bringing to the Corporate Parenting Board:***

*To update the Board on the activities and events of the children in care council and wider engagement since November 2019.*

***Recommendations:***

***1. The Board notes the progress of the Children in Care Council, the 6 month action plan and the forthcoming events and activities.***

**Background papers:**

None

**Corporate Parenting Pledges**

Our Pledge to Looked After Children

- *The Council’s Pledge to Looked After Children is currently being updated: children and young people are being consulted by means of a survey on proposed changes – this will be the subject a separate report to the Corporate Parenting Board in Early 2020. The current pledge:*
- Your Education
  - We will do everything we can to make sure you have the very best education and training possible.
  - You will be supported in taking up opportunities for further education and apprenticeships.
- Your Health
  - We will do everything we can to make sure that your health is regularly checked and your health needs are addressed.
  - We will support you to maintain and improve your health and wellbeing.
- A Good and Safe Place to Live
  - We will do all that we can to make sure you have a home where you feel safe, happy and healthy and where you feel well cared for and

supported. We will make sure your carers have access to the support they need to make this happen for you.

- Things to do
  - We will make sure you have the opportunity to take part in sporting activities, youth clubs and other social activities without facing obstacles.
  - Your passport application will be treated as a priority especially where you live in a long term placement.
- 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.

#### Our Pledge to Care Leavers

- We will improve the transition into adulthood so that all young people leaving care are better prepared and supported to live independently.
- We will improve access to education, employment and training and help you with your career plans.
- We will help you to experience stability in your lives, and feel safe and secure, including help to find and keep a stable place to live.
- We will provide improved access to health support, and go to medical appointments with you if you are worried to go alone.
- We will help you learn about budgeting and what bills to pay to help achievement of financial stability.
- We will respect you as individuals, not judge you on the past, and we will believe in your future.
- We will listen to you, hear what you say and spend some time with you away from the office

#### **Resource and legal considerations:**

The children in care council is supported by the Children's Champion.

#### **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 is works with children looked after and care experienced young people to ensure that 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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Introduction</b>  Walsall's Council4kids is a forum where care experienced Children and Young People have a chance to 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.
<b>1.1</b>	Walsall continue to have an active Children in Care Council who are involved in formal and informal meetings and events and activities. We have a diverse range of members whose ages range from 11 to 18 years, where we are continuing to recruit new members. An action plan is in place outlining the key activities and events. See Appendix 1
<b>1.2</b>	<b>WhatsApp:</b> There is a growing need for a social media platform that can connect our children and young people so that they have better access to information and resources. We know that other Local Authorities use of social media as a way of communicating with our children and young people increases the numbers involved in participation significantly.
<b>1.3</b>	The proof of concept for the application of Business WhatsApp tool has now been agreed by Information Governance and the ICT team. This will now be piloted by the Children's Champion, the Transition and Leaving Care Service and one of the social work units in Corporate Parenting. ICT have been provided with the mobile numbers for the relevant staff and this will enable them to download the App on their phones. Guidance for staff and rules for using the application with young people has been developed.
<b>1.4</b>	At the same time we are exploring alternative applications so that we can run a comparison and see what young people prefer to use. Further meetings with ICT have been arranged in the new year to set up the wider pilot as a way of measuring and comparing applications. This task and finish group will review the implementation of WhatsApp as well consider other more secure social media applications such as Trello, (used by Wolverhampton Council) or Microsoft Kaizala, which is a phone-number based, simple, and secure mobile chat apps that enables staff and young people to connect
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Key updates since last November 2019</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The annual survey with care experienced children and young people is underway and will close on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2019.</li> <li>2. In November 2019, Nat O'Brien, from the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum Catch 22 delivered 2 workshops, with staff from Corporate Parenting and TLC teams and separately with Young People to consider new and creative ways to increase the level of involvement and reach to a wider range of young people.</li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The session with staff was very interactive session with practitioners and managers and explored the enablers and barriers to participation and the benefits. One of the suggestions that was overwhelmingly popular was developing a pool of Participation Champions across Children's Services who will meet regularly and look at creative ways of promoting participation.</li> <li>• Nat O'Brein also meet with young people, Catch 22, and young people engaged well and spoke about their own experiences of how they manage their Social Media group chats and how they would like to see both virtual and face to face opportunities. Their view will be incorporated into the guidance as part of the WhatsApp pilot.</li> </ul> <p>3. Regular contact and visits to Residential Homes to ensure young people are aware of their Champion and have the opportunity to participate in opportunities of engagements have continued.</p> <p>4. The Participation Apprentice role will be re advertised, this role is an integral part of participation with young people. Once the post is filled, the apprentice will work closely with young people and professionals in different settings to engage and contribute to increasing young people's level of engagement. We will utilise the experience of the young person for effective engagement and ensure young people's voice are heard using various platforms.</p>
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**2.3** The Council4Kids meets every three weeks to discuss issues that matter to them. Transport has been a barrier for some young people attending their meetings, with the support of residential staff we are working to address this to ensure young people attend.

### **Our Meetings:**

- The Corporate Parenting Board and Group Manager from Corporate Parenting visited the Children in Care Council to get to know each other better. Young people enjoyed the visit as they learnt more about their Corporate Parents. Young people spoke about the impact of being in care had on them. Young People regularly attend Corporate Parenting Board appreciated the opportunity to reflect on their experience of attending the meetings and were able to make suggestions about how the Board can make the meetings young people friendly.

See Appendix 2 which captures the discussion with Councillor Wilson and Councillor Jukes.

The impact of this discussion is that every alternative Board meeting will be held at the TLC Hub and Young People will be better informed about the issues for discussion at that Board meeting.

- Leading up to Anti – Bullying week 11 and 15 November, young people debated around bullying including cyber bullying and made pledges. Young people were very honest and did not want other

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young people to be bullied and could also related bullying to Mental Health.

See Appendix 2 which captures some of the work sheets completed by young people.

- During October, Walsall Safeguarding Partnership worked with its partners to organise visits for our young people who are part of the Youth Safeguarding Partners (YSP) to 'inspect' services from a young person's perspective as part of the Safeguarding Partnership's Section 11 assurance activities. With support from the Safeguarding Partnership, the young people attended CAMHS, Children's Services, Accident and Emergency, Walsall Sexual Health Clinic, National Probation Service and Youth Justice Service. Young people were able to feedback their findings which will now be shared with senior managers.  
See Appendix 3 young people attending the CAMHS service.
- Young people continue to play an integral part in Turning Point, the new Adolescence Service in shaping the service delivery. During their last meeting young people looked at creative ways families could spend time with their young people. Their ideas will contribute to part of a package of support.
- We continue to deliver the Total Respect Training monthly and staff have attended from health as well as from different council services.
- We hosted National Leaving Care week 23<sup>rd</sup> -30<sup>th</sup> October. The week opened with a Brunch cooked by our wonderful Personal Advisors and our very own Head of Service Jivan Sembi. Sally Rowe, our Director joined us for Brunch. Young people attended the hub listened to music whilst enjoying other young people's company. The week also hosted a giveaway day, food cooked by the staff from the TLC service. A big thank you for Addassa Catering who donated lunch for our young people. We also had fun and games and sporting activities, which proved to be a success.  
See Appendix 4 – Brunch at TLC.
- We now have our very first News Letter called the Influencers which has been designed and created by our Young People and highlights the important work the Children in Care Council do.  
See Appendix 5
- Young people visited their neighbours Sandwell Children in Care Council, with whom we have formed a good partnership. Sandwell were a fantastic host and young people will be inviting Sandwell to one of their meetings. Sandwell Children in Care Council shared some of their good work they had undertaken. Our young people had the opportunity to participate in Sandwell's meeting writing a note to future and early self, which they enjoyed and boosted their confidence as they shared their notes to the group. They were able to ask questions and make friends.  
See Appendix 6

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- We partnership worked with the Rees Foundation has continued to grow and Rees hosted one of many cafes around the region at Expressions in Walsall Town Centre. This drop in style café approach enabled Rees Foundation to engage with Care Leavers about the support they offer and build connections. Future Cafes are planned for the future hosting a theme to support Care Leavers.
  - Staff Awards: Our young people were part of the panel who selected the nominees for the Celebrating Achieving awards held at the Rock Church in Walsall. Young people said they really enjoyed the experience, as they were able to help make important decisions. Young people also had the opportunity to attend the event.
  - Recruitment: Young People have continued to support the recruitment of staff and in particular the recruitment for the SEND Manager. The young person said they enjoyed this experience.
  - The four Black Country Local Authorities (Fostering Project) consulted young people around developing shared services to identify issues, which are important to children in foster care and how services can be improved. A followed up will be undertaken in the new year to test out specific proposals.
  - The Social Well-being Analysis team in the Office for National Statistics will consult young people at one of our meetings on children and young people's well-being in the UK.

#### **2.4 Some of the things Young People have said.**

'I enjoyed visiting Sandwell Children's in care council'

'We would like more young people to attend the CICC'

'Would like the Corporate Parenting Board meetings to be more interesting for young people'

'We like having visitors at our meetings'

#### **2.5 Celebrations and achievements of some of our young people:**

- Well done all the young people who have contributed to the Children in Care Council over the year and for their great work, commitment and always welcome new members.
- Big well done to all our young people who remain in education and training and starting university for the first time.
- Well done LC for achieving a 100% school attendance.
- Well done CW who performed at the Excellence night.
- Well done ST and MA who was part of the young people's panel helping in the selection of nominee's process for the Celebrating Achievements Awards.
- A big thank you to the four boys at RR for showing such kindness who donated their pocket money towards hampers for Care Leavers at the Transition Leaving Care.
- Well done BW who was on the young people's panel interviewing potential staff.

- Well done RR who attended the Engage and Support Conference at Hildershiem University Germany, received excellent feedback.
- Well done NM who has turned his life around, moved to a new location and started employment..
- Well done LM who with the support of the Rees Foundation who we are working closely with has started an Open University Course and now taking driving lessons.
- Congratulations ZB a first time mom.
- Well done to LG who started an apprenticeship in hairdressing and enjoying it.
- Big congratulations IAH who now has a new job and a new home after going through a difficult period, which included losing a job.
- Well done AZS is now completing final year at six form.
- Well done MAA passed his degree and starting his Masters.
- Well done JM who is at college and head of the student council.
- Well done AC who has nearly saved the deposit for his first house.
- Good luck and well done to KB who moved to his first flat and doing really well.
- Well done BC who is doing well at university and learning to drive.
- Well done AL who will shortly become a father, remains independent and living outside of the borough.

## 2.6 **Total Respect Training:**

We continue to deliver Total Respect Training monthly.  
The next date is 28<sup>th</sup> January; 25<sup>th</sup> February and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020

## 2.7 **Forthcoming events in January and February 2020**

### **Virtual School Activities**

Years 1 and 2 young people and their siblings will be attending Birmingham Town Hall to see the Smash hit production 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt Tour.  
4<sup>th</sup> January 2020

Children In Care Council - Christmas celebration 17 December 2019

Young People's Christmas Meal@TLC Hub 19 December 2019

Corporate Parenting Board 7 January 2020

Children In Care Council - Pledge Workshop 14 January 2020

Consultation - Office of Natural Statistics 21 January 2020

Children In Care Council: Fostering Project 28 January 2020

**Pledges workshop 17 February 2020**

Children in Care Council 18 February 2020

Children in Care Council 10th March 2020



**\*\* Some dates may be subject to changes**

**2.8 TLC Drop in**

The drop in continues to offer support for Care Leavers offering a safe space to socialise with other young people to reduce loneliness and isolation whilst having access to their PA's.

## Appendix 1: 6 Month work plan attached

## Appendix 2 – Children in Care Council Meeting with Councillors Wilson and Jukes



### Appendix 3 – Youth Safeguarding Partners “inspecting services”



#### Appendix 4 – Care Leavers Week - Brunch at TLC





# THE INFLUENCERS

## Newsletter

November 2019

WELCOME TO OUR VERY FIRST EDITION OF THE CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL NEWSLETTER THE INFLUENCERS WE WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH YOU WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO.

### WHO ARE WE?

We are a group of young people in care and have care experience, we meet every three weeks at Myplace, to have our voice heard, discussing things that matter to us in order to make the service that we access better.

We make friends have fun in a safe space. We always have refreshments to keep us going and treats as a thank you for the hard work we do.

Whilst the Children in Care Council can be fun, we have undertaken some very important work. We recently interviewed the New Assistant Director of Children's Service Colleen Male.

We prepare our questions beforehand to make sure the questions we ask enables us to get to know the candidates and their reason they want to work for Children's Services.

We also interviewed Jodie Berry, recently appointed Assistant Manager for the new Adolescence Service Turning Point. We asked Jodie a few questions to tell us about her experience when we interviewed her.

### How did you feel about being interviewed by young people?

I felt fine, I love working with young people and their families so it was great to have chance to meet the young people who have helped to shape the service.

### Tell us how you found the questions we asked you?

I thought they were great, especially the first four questions that you all asked, they put me at ease and also gave people an opportunity to show who they truly are.

### How important is it to include young people in important decision making?

Personally I think it is very important, young people and their families are central to everything we do and so having their 'voices' heard in such an important part of service building is essential

### Can you describe in five words the best thing about working with young people?

Learning, trusting, supporting and fun!

### What advice would you give to young person who was unsure about getting involved in The Children in Care Council and various participation opportunities to get their view and opinions heard?

To give it a try, there is a great support network there and the opportunity to have your say about services and developments in your area. It can be so rewarding and it is great to have your voice heard.

### IMPORTANT WORK WE HAVE DONE?

We are part of an important group of young people who have helped shaped the new Adolescence Service Turning Point. Sharing our life journey and experiences through different services to help shape the service.

We delivered a workshop to professionals showing our involvement in Turning Point at Walsall's Staff Conference.

We helped co-produced the NHS Our Voice Our Shoes first ever, young people's conference around how to engage young people better. We were involved in the planning we gave our views on better ways of engagement. This will be used to work better when working with young people.



Walsall Council



# THE INFLUENCERS

## IMPORTANT WORK WE HAVE DONE?

We have helped shape the Barclays Life Skills resources through the Care Leavers Covenant who we work very closely with.

We are part of the Youth Shadow Partnership (YSP), with the support of our partners, we visited and inspected CAMHS, Children's Services, A&E, Walsall Sexual Health Clinic, National Probation Service and Youth Justice Service. We really enjoyed this, as we were able to give staff our feedback, and then feedback will also be given to Senior Managers.

Some of us delivered The Total Respect Training for the first time to Social Workers and Foster Carers. 'We were nervous as it was our first time but the training will help professionals work with us young people with care experience better'.



## QUOTES FROM MEMBERS OF THE CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL....

'I feel more confident now I attend the CICC'

'I like being on the young people's interview panel, I feel really important, I was nervous at first but that changes after a while'

'CICC gets our voice heard and we get to meet new friend'

We hosted a fun Carpool Karaoke 'Let's get to know you' where we invited our Corporate Parents and asked them questions so we understood more about them and their jobs, it also helped us to build better relationships. We had fun singing, eating pizzas and getting to know everyone. We had support from one of our fun Social workers who loves to sing with us Jahlica Dixon and Sarah Niles another singing professional who always encourages us to sing.

## ANTI-BULLYING WEEK

### 11TH-15TH NOV 2019 THEME

#### 'CHANGE STARTS WITH US'

We had a DEBATE around BULLYING and made some pledges'

'I PLEDGE to SUPPORT victims of bullying'

I PLEDGE to TALK to people that are quiet and usually by themselves and TALK to teachers'

I PLEDGE to spread the word 'NO to bullying'

'I PLEDGE I will make changes, I will support those who are in need and I will make sure those are helped and welcomed in society'

## CELEBRATIONS

We celebrated the annual Excellence night at our local Football Club Bescot Stadium with The Greatest Showman as the theme,

## NATIONAL CARE LEAVERS WEEK

23<sup>rd</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> October we kick started, the celebrations with a brunch cooked by our wonderful PA's at The TLC Hub attended by our very own Director of Children's Service Sally Rowe and head of Service Jivan Sembi who helped cook the brunch.

## WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR NEW MEMBERS TO JOIN OUR COUNCIL

Aged between 10-17yrs, come along, we meet every three weeks. We have fun, make new friends and always get treats. Contact your Children's Champion on: 07787 284682 or [michelle.cummings@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:michelle.cummings@walsall.gov.uk) or speak with your Social Worker, Carer or PA.

If you would like to feature in The Influencers Newsletter, give us a shout.

Hope you enjoyed our very first newsletter



## Appendix 6 – Visiting Sandwell Children in Care Council

