

Corporate Parenting Board

Monday 11th January 2021 at 6.00 p.m.

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

Held in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020; and conducted according to the Councils Standing Orders for Remote Meetings and those set out in the Council's Constitution.

Board Members Present:

Councillor T. Wilson (Chair)
Councillor. T. Jukes (Vice-Chair)
Councillor. K. Ferguson
Councillor L. Jeavons
Councillor M. Statham

Officers Present

Michelle Cummings	Children and Young Persons Champion
David Hughes	Children and Young Persons Champion
Elise Hopkins	Interim Director of Customer Engagement
Alison Jones	Designated Nurse LAC (Clinical Commissioning Group)
Colleen Male	Director, Children's Social Work
Zoe Morgan	Group Manager (Corporate Parenting)
Jivan Sembi	Head of Service (Children in Care, Provider and Care Leaving Services)
Donna Smith	Named LAC Nurse (Walsall Healthcare Trust)

Welcome

At this point in the meeting, the Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, and explaining the rules of procedure and legal context in which the meeting was being held. He also directed members of the public viewing the meeting to the papers, which could be found on the Council's Committee Management Information system (CMIS) webpage. Members confirmed that they could both see and hear the proceedings.

133/20

Introductions and Apologies

There were no apologies for the duration of the meeting.

134/20 **Substitutions**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

135/20 **Minutes**

A copy of the minutes of the meetings held on 2nd November 2020 were submitted.

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd November, 2020, copies having previously been circulated to each Member of the Board, be approved and signed by the chairman as a correct record.

136/20 **Young People Engagement**

A report was submitted (see annexed). The Children and Young Persons Champion presented the report and highlighted the salient points.

The Board were advised that young people met as part of an advisory panel and shared their experiences; this would contribute to the 'Participation Strategy Plan'. The 'mini influencers' and the 'influencer' groups were described, these groups were held weekly and enabled the young people to share their views and build connections.

The role of young people as health champions was discussed, and the Board were advised that monthly meetings would be held with young people.

A Member asked if there was a sustainable model for the 'children in care council', to ensure the continued engagement of young people. Officers confirmed that this was the case and the increased use of technology (due to the pandemic) had assisted this.

The Board were informed that Officers were supporting young people to deliver respect training online and ensuring that everyone felt comfortable in delivering training in this way.

Information provided to young people coming into care had been redesigned to be more child friendly and the Board would welcome a copy of this information.

Resolved (by assent)

1. Young people continue to be involved in the recruitment of staff, where possible.

2. The Children and Young People's Champion was thanked for her hard work, as she left the Authority for a new role.

3. That the Young People Engagement report be noted

137/20

Summary of Audit of Health Passports

The Designated Nurse LAC spoke to the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The Board were informed that the CCG had audited health passports over a period of six months. As part of the process young people had given feedback that they would prefer a digital passport rather than a paper copy and suggested that the format needed updating. Currently this document was not shared with Children's Services and was provided for young people's use only. It was suggested that greater involvement with Personal Advisors and Social Workers in relation to the health passports would be beneficial in the future.

Members were advised that it was hoped to introduce health passports at an earlier stage in a young person's life. Locally when promoted with young people it was called a 'Health History Document'. This was a basic health information tool and its purpose was to assist access to health services in the future. Limitations accessing health information were acknowledged by the Board.

A Member sought reassurance that communication channels were open between Social Workers / Personal Advisors and Health colleagues. The Health advisors stated that there were no barriers to this but improvements could be made and clarity should be achieved around roles and responsibilities.

Resolved (by assent)

The Summary of Audit of Health Passports report was noted and in the future performance data is included in the next report to the Board.

138/20

Local Offer to Care Leavers

The Board were informed that the 'Local Offer' published information in relation to services offered to care leavers and other services that may assist care leavers to transition into adulthood and independent living. This included information on financial support, housing, health, education and housing. Members were advised that discretionary support varied across Local Authorities. A significant amount of work had taken place in relation to the 'Local Offer'; an example of this was the council tax exemption scheme for care leavers up to the age of 25' living in and out of the borough. There were a number of young people at 25 years old, who stayed involved with children's services, and often supported younger care leavers. Consideration was being given to incentivise this. Work was also underway to identify how care leavers could be supported in the workplace to be successful in their chosen career.

The Board were assured that a significant amount of work was taking place to ensure that Walsall's final 'local offer' would be ready in April 2021.

Members acknowledged that this was a complex area, and sought reassurance that the correct signposting had been included to support young people. The Group Manager stated that it would be ensured that social workers were able to support care leavers through the document and an online platform. It was clarified that the 'setting up home grant' of £2,000 was a national figure, although as part of Walsall's Local Offer this figure would be reviewed. This was welcomed by the Board, as it had been raised by a young person at the Shadow Board.

In response to a Member query the Board were informed that caseloads were being closely monitored with the recruitment of an additional Personal Advisor.

The Mental Health support provided to Care Leavers was considered and the Board were informed that this was much needed and a firm offer from health was needed. Work was underway with the CCG to consider how the emotional wellbeing of young people could be supported. The Health Advisor suggested that the Children's Commissioner was invited to a future meeting to talk about this issue.

Resolved

That the Local Offer to Care Leavers report be noted.

Housing and accommodations needs for Care Leavers

The Head of Service presented the salient points of the report (annexed) which sets out the summary of findings of a joint audit undertaken by Money Home Job and Children's Services in respect of children leaving care as they transition into adulthood. The Board were advised that fifty young people who had left/were leaving care had been reviewed, and taken part in focus groups. This has resulted in the identification of three key areas for improvement for transition planning for care leavers:

- Staying Put planning and support.
- Preparation for living independently.
- Supporting care leavers to move into settled accommodation as they leave care or when they are in custody.

The legal responsibilities of the Authority were highlighted, and the key responsibilities of issues of consideration were also considered in order to prepare young people for adult life. Members were advised that there were several options for housing when young people left care, which were described, to the Board. Members were given further detail on actions that came out of the audit, and how the service would achieve these.

The Board were asked to consider a number of recommendations, which Members discussed.

Further to a query from a Member, Officers explained that once a Care Leaver was housed in appropriate accommodation, they were no longer eligible for priority housing status. It was noted that this may impact on their ability to move accommodation. The Interim Director of Customer Engagement stated that if their housing need was great or their current accommodation was no longer suitable they may receive gold banding again.

Resolved that:

- 1. The development of a training flat is costed and a report is presented to the Directorate Management Group for consideration (February 2021).**
- 2. The decision to evict a care leaver from local authority housing accommodation will only be made by the Director of Customer Engagement (or a delegated substitute) following consultation with the Director of Children's Social Work. Whenever safe, and practical to do so, these Directors will jointly develop a plan, with the aim of preventing the eviction from occurring.**
- 3. The Board asks Walsall Council to develop a rent guarantor scheme with Registered Social Landlord/s in Walsall and a report is presented to the Directorate Management Group for consideration (March 2021).**
- 4. The Local Authority meets the first month's rent for young people to reduce the risk of young people entering debt and a report is presented to the Directorate Management Group for consideration (February 2021).**
- 5. The Board asks the Housing and Welfare Team to explore the costs associated with improving the offer to young people leaving care to help support them with the expense of setting up and managing their home. A business plan will be developed, and taken to Cabinet, to seek approval for any additional funds that may be required to support the development of this scheme (March 2021).**
- 6. The Corporate Parenting Board visit the range of accommodation options provided for children leaving care and care leavers, when it is safe to do so.**

140/20

Work Programme

The work programme was considered by the Board. Officers were asked to provide feedback to the Board on issues that were raised as part of the Shadow Board. It was agreed that feedback would be provided to the Chair. It was suggested that a report was scheduled on the number of young people in care that are NEET, to provide assurance to the Board.

Resolved

That the work programme be noted.

Termination of Meeting

The meeting terminated at 8.00 p.m.

The date of the next meeting would be 15th February 2021.