

Title of the Report: Children in Care Council update

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.

Recommendations:

- 1. The Board notes the progress of the Children in Care Council.***

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 and an apprentice who has recently been appointed.

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: Children in Care Council

<p>1.0</p>	<p>Introduction</p> <p>The Council4Kids, Walsall's children in care council is a forum where young people looked after are able to shape and influence the parenting and support that they receive at every level. 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 input to the setting of local authority strategies which affect those in or who have recently left care.</p>
<p>1.1</p>	<p>Walsall has an active children in care council with approximately 12 young people who participate within group settings, consultation or virtually. We have a diverse range of members whose ages range from 11 to 18 years, and we are continuing to recruit new members. We have active apprentices who work within the council and are also part of the children in care council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The last survey we undertook around 50 care leavers participated. Once the online survey is built this will help us to reach more young people; • We are working with National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum to look at further ways to increase the level of involvement and reach a wider range of young people; • Our new apprentice will work closely with young people in different settings to increase the level of engagement including regular visits to the residential homes, supported accommodation and at the drop in; • We will be attending team meeting and unit meetings to ensure information is given out to social workers and personal advisors to give to their young people. • The website is being updated so that it has a more young people friendly format; • We are in the process of piloting Whatsapp which will be part of the communication with young people, this will enable faster information to be shared and help with promoting CICC.
<p>1.2</p>	<p>The Council4Kids meets every three weeks to discuss issues that matter to them and to update the council on work undertaken within different services. We are continuing to promote the Council4Kids to ensure all children with care experience and care leavers are aware there is a platform for them to influence decisions that affect them and the services they access. This has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people having more of a say in decision making; • Young people who are now contributing to the Safeguarding Partnership; Young people who will be "walking the floor" at various services to see if the services are doing what they say they are doing (this includes Sexual Health, CAMHS, MASH, Early Help, Hollies, WMP); • Young people have been involved in interviews for staff and have seen candidates appointed that they have had as their first choice; • Young People attend the Corporate Parenting Board on a regular basis so that members can hear first-hand from them;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new adolescence service is working very closely with young people across the service to shape the service delivery - young people have interviewed the staff and had a major input in how this service will look; • Young people are delivering Total Respect Training monthly – staff have attended from health as well as from different council services; • Young people will be working with IRO’s to look at barriers to attending their child protection and looked after review meetings - the aim is to increase meeting attendance with a more child / young people friendly approach ensuring young people’s wishes are taken into consideration.
<p>1.3</p>	<p>Feedback from young people</p> <p>Young people who have attended the Corporate Parenting Board have welcomed the experience. They have said it gives them the opportunity to have their say and would really appreciate an opportunity to think about how the experience could be easier and less formal so it does not feel intimidating.</p> <p>Young people have also said they would like to see more of their peers participate in the events and see more young people experience the opportunities they have, for example, in the recruitment of staff and senior leaders, Youth Shadow Panel and the Council4Kids. They have also valued the activities and trips as it is enabling them to meet new friends and build their confidence.</p> <p>The young people also made a contribution to the Big Conversation which has helped to shape the transformation of children’s social care services.</p>
<p>1.4</p>	<p>Celebrations and achievements of some of our young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well done to R for being selected to attend the Exchange and Support Conference for Care Leavers in Germany in November. • Fingers crossed for H who has also been selected but is on the waiting list if any other spaces becomes available. • Well done Lee and Ebony who participated in the Interview for the Express and Star Newspaper with Councillor Wilson around the importance of the Children in Care Council. The young people really felt this experience boosted their confidence. • Well done J who flew back from Spain on his own, this was a big achievement for him. • Well done J who passed Level 1 bricklaying course and also had an interview at college and will be starting a media course in September. • Well done J who has passed her 2nd year at university. • H as undertaken the Total Respect Train the trainer and regularly delivers the Total Respect Programme. • R is about to undertake Total Respect “train the trainer” and become a trainer along with other members of the CICC.
<p>1.5</p>	<p>Virtual School Activities:</p> <p>The Virtual School Tea Party took place on Friday 5th July. Primary aged children to came together to celebrate their achievements within their lives and education. Children were also able to meet small animals, have their</p>

	<p>faces painted, and eat a variety of tea party foods. This sponsored by Tarmac and was great success.</p> <p>The yearly transitions residential took place at Edgmond Hall Outdoor Centre 12 and 14 July. 6 children who are moving to secondary school attended. The trip gave young people the opportunity to discuss their concerns about this transitional period whilst building friendships. The children took part in activities such as team building games, den building, and archery and had a great deal of fun. Children made friends and felt a lot more confident regarding starting secondary school in September.</p>														
1.6	<p>Total Respect Training: Further training dates are now place 10th September 2019</p> <p>New dates to be confirmed: October November Dec Jan</p> <p>Train the Trainers course will be delivered with neighbouring Local Authorities on the 28 and 29th August and three new young people and a professional will be trained which will increase the pool of trainers.</p>														
1.7	<p>Young people's football team: (See Appendix 1) Young people have undertaken weekly football training sessions and formed a team with the support of a personal advisor and a social worker. The team participated in their first Football Tournament hosted by Coventry Local Authority. Young people welcomed the experienced as they play against their neighbouring local authorities, which gave them the opportunity to meet other young people. Young people will take ownership of the team and development it further. The team are now planning to arrange a football match with their Corporate Parents leading up to National Care Leavers Week</p>														
1.8	<p>Events that took place over the summer and autumn:</p> <table> <tr> <td>30 July 2019</td> <td>Summer Event</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5 August 2019</td> <td>Madame Tussaud's (Appendix 2)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9 August 2019</td> <td>Football Tournament Coventry</td> </tr> <tr> <td>19 August 2019</td> <td>Black Country Museum</td> </tr> <tr> <td>26 September 2019</td> <td>Carpool Karaoke</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1 October 2019</td> <td>Theatre Evening Wizard of Oz</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11th Dec 2019</td> <td>Theatre Evening Dick Whittington.</td> </tr> </table>	30 July 2019	Summer Event	5 August 2019	Madame Tussaud's (Appendix 2)	9 August 2019	Football Tournament Coventry	19 August 2019	Black Country Museum	26 September 2019	Carpool Karaoke	1 October 2019	Theatre Evening Wizard of Oz	11 th Dec 2019	Theatre Evening Dick Whittington.
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1.9	<p>Meeting with Corporate Parents: The children and young people are delighted that elected members will be meeting with them on the 26 November 2019. This will be an opportunity to talk about the impact of being in care and working with the foster carers.</p> <p>The invitation for senior leaders and elected members is also extended to the Carpool Karaoke on 26 September 2019 and this is an opportunity for young people to ask their Corporate Parents things that they have always wanted to know about them.</p>														

<p>2.0</p>	<p>Care Leavers Week</p> <p>We have a calendar of events to celebrate National Care Leavers week. The week will start on 23rd October with a Care Leavers Brunch.</p> <p>As part of the celebrations, Care Leavers will also have the opportunity to attend The National Leaving Care’s Bench Marking Forum’s Big Celebration where they will have the opportunity to meet other Care Leavers, locally and nationally to celebrate achievements.</p> <p>We will also be working in partnership by supporting our Sandwell neighbours in attendance of their Care Leavers conference and end the celebrations with a celebration at the Hub.</p>
<p>2.1</p>	<p>Working with Catch 22</p> <p>We are working very closely with the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum – Catch 22 to utilise their field of expertise around care leavers and children in care to increase the wider reach and sustainability of young people’s engagement and participation.</p> <p>We have a six-month action plan agreed for the service, which will include a whole service approach.</p> <p>The first consultation was undertaken with the Children’s Champion, the Group and Team Manager followed a meeting with the young people to think about their views of the service in preparation for how engagement and participation could be improved and include more young people.</p>

Appendix 1 :



Appendix 2



