

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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1.0	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Walsall's Council4kids is a forum where Children and young people who are looked after or left care have a chance to have a say about the things that really matter in their lives. Children and young people are able to have an input to the setting of local authority strategies which shape and influence the parenting and support that they receive at every level.</p>
1.1	<p>Walsall has an active children in care council whereby Children and young people participate in group settings or virtually. We have a diverse range of members whose ages range from 11 to 18 years, where 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 annual survey will be rolled out for young people to look at what we as an organisation do well and what we can do better for our young people who access the service. • Work continues 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. • The 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 the drop in. The apprentice will be attending team meetings and unit meetings to ensure information is distributed to Social Workers and Personal Advisors to give to young people. • The Children's Service website is being updated which will include a more young people friendly look, whereby we envisage this will also reach a wider network of young people. • We understand young people communicate in various ways due to modern technology, therefore we will be part of a pilot for Whatsapp. The pilot will insure important information that promote the Children in Care Council and other events important to young people is shared at a faster pace.
1.2	<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. Whilst we have young who attend, one of the biggest challenges is around transport. This is an area which that we are carefully considering how this can be addressed to ensure young people do not miss out due to the transport.</p> <p>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 who are now contributing to the Youth Safeguarding Partnership. Young people now have confirmed dates during the half term to undertake "walking the floor" at various services to see if the

services are doing what they say they are doing (this includes Sexual Health, CAMHS, Children's Services and Youth Justice)

- Young people having more of a say in decision-making. The young people's Interview Panel is going from strength to strength. Young people have recently interviewed the Multi Agency Exploitation Meeting Co-ordinator, The Team Manager for new Adolescence Service Turning Point and again have seen staff appointed which was young people's first choice.
- Young People attend the Corporate Parenting Board on a regular basis so that members can hear first-hand from them;
- Turning Point the new Adolescence Service is working very closely with our young people across the service. A co –production workshop was delivered at the Staff Conference, highlighting how they have played an intergyral part in shaping the service delivery.
- Young people are delivering Total Respect Training monthly – staff have attended from health as well as from different council services;
- Independent Reviewing Officers have worked with young people to look at barrier as to why they do not attend their meetings. The aim of the work is to increase meeting attendance with a more child / young people friendly approach ensuring young people's wishes are taken into consideration. (See Appendix 1)
- Young people have been part of the NHS first ever Safeguarding Conference Our Voice Our Shoes held at Bescot Stadium. (See Appendix 4). A very successful event attended by young people and health professionals. The conference aim was to look at creative ways professionals can engage with young people who access their service. Our young people along with our neighbouring local authorities helped with the early planning stages of the conference. Young people participated in the workshops, meeting and greeting on the day and giving ideas of how health professionals can use different approaches to actively engage young people.
- Children In Care Council hosted another successful Carpool Karaoke, which enabled children and young people to get to know their Social Workers and PA's. A big thank you to the talented Social Worker Jahlica Dixon and Youth Worker Sarah Niles Chance whose powerful singing voices enabled our young people to display their own creative singing voices. It was great to see Sally Rowe our Director of Children's Service and Jivan Sembi Head of Service for Corporate Parent and Transition Leaving Care attending the event.
- Young people have participated in consultation with Public Health Healthy Child Programme around the recommissioning of 0-19 services. The consultation aims to find out what young people think of the services currently and what the services should look like in the future. The findings from the survey will be used to inform the design and delivery of the services in the future.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is National Leaving Care week 23rd -30th October. We will be kick starting the week with a Care Leavers Brunch, where young people can meet other care leavers eat breakfast prepared by our wonderful PA's. There will be different events at the hub creating a buzz over the week including giveaways, games, sports, shop and swap along with plenty of fun and games. (See Appendix 3) • Young people will play an integral part of the review of the Flash Service. An advisory panel is being developed for the first stage to look at the service to establish what young people's understanding is of the service. • We have a young people who is part of The Young Combined Authority (YCA is a governance opportunity and development programme for those who want their opinions heard and are passionate about making changes for young people in the West Midlands. The board will be built by young people for young people). • Young People were awarded for their great achievement at the Annual Excellent Night. Another great success with The Greatest Showman as the theme for the night. Young people worked hard to showcase their talent alongside staff. Great ambience and a good time had by all. A big thank you and well done to all those who participated and enabled our young people to have a successful fun evening whilst celebrating achievements. • As a thank you for all their hard work, young people enjoyed a trip to the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre to watch the classic The Wizard of Oz. Young people enjoyed this experience.
1.3	<p>Feedback from young people</p> <p>Young people enjoyed working with the Independent Reviewing Officers when they visited the Children in Care Council Session, young people said it helped them to understand more about their role and was happy to look at how more young people could attend their meetings.</p> <p>'I like the team work'</p> <p>'The Carpool Karaoke was fun but we would like more Social Workers to attend, as this will help us to have a better relationship with them. This would also give us an opportunity to tell them about the work we are doing at The Children in Care Council and help us to get more children to attend our meetings'</p> <p>'Really enjoyed the Excellence night, always look forward to it. A big thank you to Lorraine and her staff who always do their best for us on the night , just one thing, 'why can't we have our food bought to us like the councillor's, I did not think it was fair that it was our night and the councillors took centre stage'.(from an anonymous young person)</p> <p>'Really enjoyed the excellent night The Greatest Showman, I would like to perform next year'</p>

1.4	<p>Celebrations and achievements of some of our young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well done to all our young people starting their first year at university and those starting college. • Well done to all our young people who received an award and those who performed at the fantastic Excellent Night 2019 held at Bescot Stadium. • Well done H whose idea 'Dreams' has been chosen by Coram Voices who thought this was a great idea for creative responses. • Congratulations to GR who has been successful in securing a tenancy under the housing first model and recently moved into his property with the support of his PA. This will give him the support and stability he needs to help settle into the community and is very excited. • Congratulations to JS/JS who both successfully have, been awarded British Citizenship after a Home Office Appeal. • Congratulations CW who received a 2.2 after passing her Geography degree. • AD who successfully completed his Physical Educational Sports Level 2 Apprenticeship with Walsall Football Club. • Well done MS Ali who has completed his ESOL Course at Walsall College. • Well done JR who has passed his International Baccalaureate, B's for English, French, Biology and Music and C's for Maths and Psychology and has now applied to join the Army. • Well done TW who has successfully passed his English and Maths Exams and now looking to enrol as an Apprentice for a Teaching Assistant Level 2. • A massive well done to the talented singer song writer TR who recently achieved an amazing award throughout all the college Student of the year.
1.5	<p>Virtual School Half Term Activities:</p> <p>Virtual school will be hosting a range of fun activities over the half term.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor activities including canoeing archery and climbing • Graffiti Art Workshop for secondary age young people. • Photography Workshop where young people will learn the shooting styles and lighting techniques, with the opportunity to build your own portfolio and take this with you.
1.6	<p>Total Respect Training:</p> <p>Total Respect Training October 30th will be delivered by our youngest members of the pool of trainers during the half term break Further dates have been confirmed – See Appendix 2</p>
1.7	<p>Drop in</p> <p>The drop in continues to be a big support mechanism for our Care Leavers offering a safe space to socialise to reduce loneliness and isolation and build friendships, whilst promoting life skills such as cooking on a budget. We also have different agencies continuing to offer support. The Care Leavers Covenant most recently supported the drop in sharing with young people the opportunities available through the Care Leavers Covenant and their aim.</p>

	Sexual Health continue to attend regular offering advice guidance and support for our young people, enabling them to make, more informed choices, whilst keeping safe.
1.8	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.

Ask young person who you want at
the meeting

What can professionals do
better to make young
people feel more
comfortable in
attending
CP meetings?

talk 1-1
before
meetings

see IRO
more

change
according
to age

Everyone
having a
turn to
talk

seen
every
6 months

talk with
you not
at you

not pre-
judging you
based on your
past

Everyone
being
honest

getting
you
involved

no
jargon

Less formal-
games and
have fun

Comfortable

Comfortable
chairs

chilled out
approach/
relaxed

Home
visits
before

don't pay big part
in young person's life

Appendix 2
Calendar of Events

Children in Care Council - How to increase young people's attendance at meetings with IRO's	15 th October 2019
Care Leavers Week	23 rd -30 th October 2019
Young People's Interview Panel	25 th October 2019
Total Respect Training	29 th October 2019
Children In Care Council -	5 th November 2019
Corporate Parenting Board	11 th November 2019
Visit to Sandwell Children In Care Council	20 th November 2019
Children In Care Council – with CPB	26 th November 2019
Total Respect	26 th November 2019
Care Leavers Theatre Trip Dick Whittington	11 th December 2019
Children In Care Council - Christmas celebration	17 th December 2019
Young People's Christmas Meal@TLC Hub	19 th December 2019
Children In Care Council	7 th January 2020
Total Respect Training	28 th January 2020
Children In Care Council	28 th January 2020
Children in Care Council	18 th February 2020
Total Respect Training	25 th February 2020
Children in Care Council	10 th March 2020
Children In Care Council	31 st March 2020
Total Respect Training	31 st March 2020

Some dates may be subject to change.

Care Leavers Week

Come and Join the celebration!

Brunch at the TLC Hub

23rd October 2019
11.00am - 3.00pm

Sports

Come test your Football skills!
25th October 2019
Pa's/sw's v young people
Meet at 12.00pm

Prizes, Free Food, Giveaways, Cake decorating at the TLC Hub

28th October 2019
2.00pm - 6.00pm

TLC Hub address:
Surestart, Brineton Street,
WS2 9EP

For further information contact:
Michelle Cummings 07787284682
Sian McAllister 07584521982

23rd - 30th
October



Music | Cinema Tickets | Karaoke and much more!



Walsall Council

Youngsters take limelight to share views

Report by Harriet Evans
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YOUNG people took centre stage at the first ever NHS Safeguarding conference in the region.

The 'Our Voice, Our Shoes' event was held at Bescott Stadium in Walsall and saw professionals and youth workers come together to listen to young people from the Black Country share their ideas about how to improve services.

The full-day event saw a number of speakers take to the stage in the morning introduced by local musician and BBC Radio WM presenter, Vital.

Speaking about the conference, Vital, said: "I've been really inspired by the speakers who've got onto the stage today.

"When like-minded people come together like this we can make a change."

The various speakers addressed topics from their own first-hand experience, including the effects of drugs and being a member of a gang.

Lewis Callary, aged 17 and a volunteer



The youngsters and youth workers at the Our Voices, Our Shoes conference

at the event and member of Dudley Youth Council, said: "It's been a really good event, we've had some great speakers who have spoke about their struggles and how they have turned their lives around." Representatives from NHS England, Brook, Phase Trust, The Way and Black Country Women's Aid were in attendance at the event

to promote the services they offer to young people and signpost those looking for advice.

Young people representing B Safe Wolverhampton, who work towards empowering young people and getting their voices heard, also took to the stage to tell the audience about the work they have been doing

in the community. The group of youngsters have been working to combat knife crime in the city of Wolverhampton and facilitated the installation of a knife amnesty bin in Penn Fields. They also showed the anti-knife crime video they created, which demonstrates the impact that choices and decisions can make, such as deciding to carry a knife.

The video created by the B Safe team, in partnership with Headstart and the Learn and Play Foundation, was met with a roaring round of applause from the audience.

Talented youngsters also came to the stage and rapped lyrics they had written themselves about the issues they feel are affecting other young people and society, including peer pressure, knife crime and exploitation.

Later in the day the audience split into groups to discuss mental health, stereotyping, access to healthcare and social media and ways to improve how issues relating to these topics are dealt with.

Organiser of the event, Rachel Stone, said: "The speakers have been uniquely inspirational, some making us laugh, some nearly making us cry they've all been very real. We couldn't have done it without the help of the team, Vital and the young people that have been involved."





Walsall Virtual School

Half Term Activities

Are you in year 7-11 and have an interest in photography then come and join our photography workshop where you will learn the basics of photography such as shooting styles and lighting techniques. You will also build your own portfolio to take away with you.

The workshop will take place on Wednesday 30th October from 10.00am-3.00pm at the Education Development Centre, Pelsall Lane, Rushall, Walsall WS4 1NG

We have only 8 places available that will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

If you would like to book a place please contact the Virtual school on 01922 652816



Walsall Council



Walsall Virtual School Half Term Activities

Are you in year 6, 10 or 11 and would like to take part in outdoor activities such as canoeing, archery and climbing then come and join at The Malthouse Outdoor Activity Centre, Hurst Lane, Tipton DY4 9AB

Monday 28th October

9.30am-2.30pm for year 6 pupils

Tuesday 29th October

9.30am-2.30pm for year 10 & 11 students

We have only 12 places each day so they will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

If you would like to book a place please contact the Virtual school on 01922 652816



Walsall Council