

Young Peoples Engagement

Executive Summary:

The Council4Kids, the “Children in Care Council” (CICC), 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.

This report describes some of the highlights of the CICC since the last Corporate Parenting Board on 8th September 2021.

Reason for bringing to the Corporate Parenting Board:

To provide the Corporate Parenting Board an update on the activities of the CICC which will allow the Board to offer any support to the children, in partnership with strategic management as corporate parents for looked after children.

We are keen to ensure that the CICC is encouraged to share highlights and raise any issues and concerns they may have on behalf of care experienced young people in Walsall with a view to improving services and outcome for children in the care of Walsall Council.

The Shadow Board has been put in place to ensure that the young people are fully involved in the Corporate Parenting Board and that their views are considered as part of this process

Recommendations:

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

Background papers:

Previous Young People Engagement reports.

Corporate Parenting Pledges

The Walsall Promise for all Children in Care and Care Leavers

Resource and legal considerations:

Walsall is committed to ensuring that children and young people are involved in decision making and processes that directly affect their lives through.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced seven Corporate Parenting Principles and 2 of the principles focus on the involvement and participation of children and young people:

- Encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- Take account of a child or young person's views, wishes and feelings

Article 12 United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child says that children and young people have the human right to have opinions and for these opinions to be heard and taken seriously and taken seriously.

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 in care and our care experienced young people to ensure that our CICC is a 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 their families.

Consultation:

The CICC 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

The following items are some of the highlights that have happened since the last Corporate Parenting Board in November 2021.

1.1 Willenhall Litter Pick

On Saturday 15th January we went out in force to do our bit and help clean up the local community. This incredible project all started with a truly wonderful letter from one of our members of the Children In Care Council Maria age 11. Last summer she wrote the following letter:

Dear sir or madam

My name is Maria and I'm 11 years of age I know that I am only young but I feel we as children are not getting heard. You may be wondering in what way, we feel we need more jobs doing to help the environment and for children's well being for example we could give each school a environment representative or get a committee to go out each day or weekend to pick up litter, also you could put more bins around the Area.

But I also feel that children like me are not getting heard in the way we are supposed to be well I think you should put more children's ideas into thought

I hope you put these ideas into consideration thank you

Yours sincerely Mxxx

We had a great turnout of volunteers and collected over 50 bags of rubbish. We had some wonderful feedback on the day from local residents saying how kind our volunteers were in helping keep their local town clean and tidy. It was a real joint effort and on behalf of all of us in the CICC and Care Leavers group and staff working for the council we would like to say a special thanks to Maria, her sisters and her Foster Carers. We have attached some pictures to show how well the day went.





1.2 Interview panel at end of January for the *Director of Early Help and Walsall Right 4 Children Partnership*

We started off the year as we mean to go on by getting three of our Care Leavers involved in a very important interview panel. In total they interviewed five candidates and really put them through their paces giving them some really challenging questions. The interview panels went well and each of our care leavers got the chance to take it in turns asking different questions and taking a lead helping build their confidence and self-esteem. Their feedback on the panels was recorded and used in determining who should get this important role.

1.3 New virtual care leavers group

At the last Corporate Parenting Board meeting one of our long standing and committed care leavers Catherine had asked about us setting up and running a new virtual care leavers group. Catherine requested this due to studying at university far away from Walsall meaning she is not able to attend most of our face-to-face meetings. Our Care Leaver Ambassador Sophia is taking a lead role in this and has asked our Transition Leaving Care service to advertise and promote this group to all of our care leavers, hoping that this will help people feel more connected if they are not able to join us in person. Our initial plans will be

to hold one per month and then to review it after a three month period. For details on the dates please see the schedule at the end of this report.

1.4

Total Respect Training

Total Respect training is run by children in care and care leavers (in partnership with staff). This training provides a valuable insight into the lives of children in care and care leavers.

Total Respect is a training course for anyone who works with children in care, or makes decisions affecting their lives, including social workers, foster carers, residential workers, participation workers, Independent Reviewing Officers, Team Managers, Senior Managers, Directors and Elected Members. Total Respect will help develop practical strategies for ensuring children's effective participation. Our vision for Walsall is that all staff working with children or working in fields that affect their lives, attend this training which will help give a valuable insight on how your actions impact on the lives of children.

It aims to

- encourage participants to be aware of and challenge the assumptions that are made about young people;
- allow participants to understand the experiences of young people who use their service (get participants to walk in your shoes);
- give participants time to think about young people as individuals (not as cases/ numbers);
- concentrate on skills needed when working with children who use services (active listening; effective communication; observation; report writing);
- support participants to know how to promote participation for individual young people in their care planning, and in wider policy and service development;
- provide knowledge of children's rights and advocacy.

As requested by the chair at the board meeting in January we have now secured cost free venues to deliver this training from. We will continue to do this for the remaining dates of the training for the rest of this year.

1.5

Video from Young People for Social Worker Induction

A meeting is scheduled with the Principle Social worker to discuss how we can raise the profile of Children in Care Council in the induction of all new social workers. The current proposal is that we produce a video explaining what CIC is all about and to include comments directly from children and young people about how the CIC Council has helped them. We have made a start with this at our Council 4 kids meeting on 10th February and hope to start coproducing this with some of our children. This will be an important project for our young group as it will help set out the voice of our children which should help improve practice across our Directorate.

1.6

Good news stories

During the first week in February I received a message from a care leaver: "Is there any new care group leaver meetings this year I am very lonely." I responded immediately, added him to the care leaver's WhatsApp group and continued to message him. The response he had from the group and the new connections he built as a result of this small yet transformational act has made such a big difference to him. He now feels connected to care leavers/ young adults within Walsall which we hope in turn will build his social circle as he has no family in England and very few friends.

1.7

Other news

Care Leavers Covenant - South Staffs Water (update)

I wanted to share with you a recent offer developed by South Staffordshire Water for care leavers in our area but also how it is developing.

This came about initially when in Walsall we invited Alex Latham from the Covenant to share a presentation with us so we could review our current commitment to the covenant. Walsall are classed as a trail blazer and have had some real positive engagement with this service which is nationwide.

As a result of Bernard Cysewski (Interim Team Lead, Money Home Job) being present at the meeting, the Covenant, in partnership with contacts passed on through Bernard made some real positive steps in helping our care leavers when managing their own tenancies and bills.

This is what it now looks like:

- Discounted two-year tariff. 60% in the first year and 40% in the second.
- Financial Literacy Training Sessions. Held within your area, with up to ten young people at any time by South Staffs focusing on managing bills and understanding their water bills.
- Advanced notice of employment opportunities published on the Covenant's website and sent directly to young people signed up to [Connects](#).

How to access the offer:

To access the discounted tariff, a care leaver or their personal advisor can complete the attached one-page form, returning it to the freepost address. To check they're with SSW they can search using:

<https://www.water.org.uk/advice-for-customers/find-your-supplier/>

If your leaving care team would like to request a financial literacy training session, then please email NicholaClarke@south-staffs-water.co.uk directly.

If we can have such success like the example above imagine what else could be possible if we continue to strive forward and seek out new initiatives for our care leavers.

1.8 **Dates for the diary**

Council 4 Kids group dates:

<u>Date/Time:</u> 4:30 – 6:30	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Any other info (Activity, Guest Speaker...)</u>
10 th February	TLC Hub	
24 th February	TLC Hub	
10 th March	TLC Hub	
24 th March	TLC Hub	
7 th April	TLC Hub	
21 st April	TLC Hub	
5 th May	TLC Hub	
19 th May	TLC Hub	
2 nd June	TLC Hub	
16 th June	TLC Hub	
30 th June	TLC Hub	
14 th July	TLC Hub	
28 th July	TLC Hub	
11 th August	TLC Hub	
25 th August	TLC Hub	
8 th September	TLC Hub	
22 nd September	TLC Hub	
6 th October	TLC Hub	
20 th October	TLC Hub	
3 rd November	TLC Hub	
17 th November	TLC Hub	
1 st December	TLC Hub	
15 th December	TLC Hub	

Additional events

<u>Date/Time</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Any other info (Activity, Guest Speaker...)</u>
21 st Feb 10:30 – 4:30	Woodlands Adventure and Outdoor Learning	5 spaces available for care leavers. Several forms to be completed. Will need to be able to get dropped off and picked up. Food and drink provided. Will need spare clothes. <u>Attendees:</u>

Care Leavers Group 2022

<u>Date/Time:</u> 4.30 to 6.30	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Any other info (Activity, Guest Speaker...)</u>
3 rd March	TLC Hub (May change	TLC Managers
31 st March	TLC Hub (May change	TLC Managers
28 th April	TLC Hub (May change	
26 th May	TLC Hub (May change	
23 rd June	TLC Hub (May change	
21 st July	TLC Hub (May change	
18 th August	TLC Hub (May change	
15 th September	TLC Hub (May change	
13 th October	TLC Hub (May change	
10 th November	TLC Hub (May change	
8 th December	TLC Hub (May change	

Additional events

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21 st Feb 10:30 – 4:30	Woodlands Adventure and Outdoor Learning	5 spaces available for care leavers. Several forms to be completed. Will need to be able to get dropped off and picked up. Food and drink provided. Will need spare clothes. <u>Attendees:</u> Jordan (confirmed via WhatsApp) Kayden Jukes (confirmed via WhatsApp)

Virtual Care Leavers Group

<u>Date/Time</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Any other info (Activity, Guest Speaker...)</u>
Monday 7 th March 5:30 – 6:30	Microsoft Teams Click here to join the meeting	
Monday 4 th April 5:30 – 6:30	Microsoft Teams Click here to join the meeting	
Monday 2 nd May 5:30 – 6:30	Microsoft Teams Click here to join the meeting	
Monday 6 th June 5:30 – 6:30	Microsoft Teams Click here to join the meeting	
Monday 4 th July 5:30 – 6:30	Microsoft Teams Click here to join the meeting	
Monday 1 st August 5:30 – 6:30	Microsoft Teams Click here to join the meeting	
Monday 5 th September 5:30 – 6:30	Microsoft Teams Click here to join the meeting	
Monday 3 rd October 5:30 – 6:30	Microsoft Teams Click here to join the meeting	
Monday 7 th November 5:30 – 6:30	Microsoft Teams Click here to join the meeting	
Monday 5 th December 5:30 – 6:30	Microsoft Teams Click here to join the meeting	

David Hughes
Children's Champion