

Corporate Parenting Board's Operational Work Streams and Review of our Pledges

Executive Summary

The Corporate Parenting Board is supported by a multi-agency operational steering group which oversees the work of the various work streams. This report provides a summary of the work to date.

Reason for bringing to the Corporate Parenting Board

To update the Board on the operational work streams and review of Our Pledges to children in care and young people leaving care

Recommendations

To note the actions identified in respect of relevant work stream.

Background papers

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2017-2020

Resource and legal considerations

Corporate parenting responsibilities for Children in Care and Care experienced young people sit with the Local Authority and its partners and are enshrined in legislation. (Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 imposes a duty on local authorities to 'safeguard and promote the welfare of each child they look after'.) The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced new duties in respect of Care Leavers.

The Government have also introduced a set of corporate parenting principles that require all departments within a local authority to recognise their role as corporate parent. The Act stipulates that the local authorities must have regard to these principles whenever they exercise a function in relation to children looked after and care leavers.

The principles require corporate parents:

- to act in the best interests of, and to promote the health and wellbeing of children and young people;
- to encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- to take account of a child or young person's views, wishes and feelings;
- to help children and young people to gain access to and get the best use of the services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;

- to promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for children and young people;
- for children and young people to be safe and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;
- to prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

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.
- Communities are prospering and resilient with all housing needs met in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion.

Citizen impact

Looked after children and care leavers are citizens of Walsall and as Corporate Parents we have a duty to look after them as we would our own children and prepare them for adulthood so they can fulfil their potential and play a full and rewarding part in their communities.

Environmental impact

None

Performance management

Corporate Parenting Board ensures everyone works together to fulfil the corporate parenting role and to hold each other to account for making this happen.

- it acts as the visible organisational champion for looked after children and young people and care leavers, promoting their rights, entitlements and aspirations;
- the mobilisation and optimum use of resources available to get the best chance of success for children in care and to support care leavers to positively transition to adulthood and independence.

It does this by:

- developing, implementing, overseeing and reviewing the Corporate Parenting Strategy and action plans to ensure that the whole Council and partner agencies have a joint commitment to corporate parenting,

- ensuring outcomes fulfil the Council's responsibilities towards children and young people in care and care leavers;
- monitoring the outcomes for looked after children and young people and care leavers in conjunction with the Council's Scrutiny arrangements and other partnerships, to ensure their achievements are celebrated.

Reducing inequalities

The Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out the response 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. By being effective Corporate Parents for Looked After Children and Care Leavers, we collectively seek to redress the disadvantage that looked after children and care leavers face.


Consultation

The Corporate Parenting Strategy runs until 2020 and was informed by consultation with children and young people.

The work to refresh the strategy will commence in 2020 and the involvement of the Children in Care Council (Council 4Kids) will be instrumental in setting the priorities going forward.

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1.0	<p>Background</p> <p>The Corporate Parenting Strategy covers the period 2017 to 2020 and articulates the aspirations we hold for our looked after children and young people leaving care, our promises to them over the timeframe of the strategy, and describes how we will achieve them.</p> <p>The strategy was developed in 2017, in conjunction with young people, carers and partner agencies. The strategy is underpinned by our Pledges to children in care and young people leaving care.</p>
	<p>Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out the following priorities and these have informed the work plans for each of the work streams</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen the corporate parenting role including support and develop our Council 4Kids and New Belongings group. 2. Make sure all looked after children are listened to so their views can help plan what we do and make it better. 3. Improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people being looked after and care leavers. 4. Ensure looked after children and care leavers are safe in their home and in their community and are cared for close to Walsall, that they have suitable accommodation whilst in our care, and in line with their best interests, move quickly to a permanent home. 5. Improve education and improve access to work, education and training.
	<p>Our Pledge to Children in Care agreed in 2017 was as follows:</p> <p>Your Education</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will do everything we can to make sure you have the very best education and training possible. 2. You will be supported in taking up opportunities for further education and apprenticeships. <p>Your Health</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. We will do everything we can to make sure that your health is regularly checked and your health needs are addressed. 4. We will support you to maintain and improve your health and wellbeing. <p>A Good and Safe Place to Live</p>

5. 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

6. We will make sure you have the opportunity to take part in sporting activities, youth clubs and other social activities without facing obstacles.

7. Your passport application will be treated as a priority especially where you live in a long term placement.

Your Voice.....Your Influence

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. Contact with people who are important to you will be actively promoted and arrangements will clearly take into account your wishes and feelings.

11. 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 Young People leaving care was as follows:

In keeping with the vision outlined in 'Keep on Caring' (July 2016) we will improve the transition into adulthood so that all young people leaving care are better prepared and supported to live independently.

12. We will improve access to education, employment and training and help you with your career plans

13. 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

14. We will provide improved access to health support, and go to medical appointments with you if you are worried to go alone

15. We will help you learn about budgeting and what bills to pay to help achievement of financial stability.

16. We will respect you as individuals, not judge you on the past, and we will believe in your future

	<p>17. We will listen to you, hear what you say and spend some time with you away from the office</p>
1.2	<p>Each of the work streams each had an action plan to support the delivery of our pledge to children in care and young people who have left care in Walsall. An operational steering group was chaired by the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care to track the progress of the work streams.</p> <p>This Group has not met since June 2019 due to changes in leadership. An update is provided in respect of each of the work streams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect and influence - Jivan Sembi Group Manager. • Home – a safe place to live - Elizabeth Gosling Group Manager Provider Services • Education, training and employment - Lorraine Thompson Virtual Head • Good health and wellbeing - Alison Jones, Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children and Children Looked After CCG • Lifestyle and leisure - Paul Wicker Principal Sport and Active Recreation Officer
2.0	<p>Respect and influence: Our Pledge to Children and Young People in care or those who have left care is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • We will listen to care leavers and hear what they say. • 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.
2.1	<p>Update: This work stream has delivered on its work plan and it has now been dissolved. The rationale for this is that the Children's Champion's work plan is now fully embedded operationally.</p> <p>Other measures are in place to support the involvement of children and young people to ensure that the Voice of the Child informs service delivery and their individual care planning.</p> <p>The Children's Champion provides regular reports to the Children's Directorate Management Team and the Corporate Parenting Board on the progress of the work plan.</p> <p>In addition the Children's Champion, Assistant Director and Head of Service meet regularly to review the work plan.</p>

	These measures mean that the need for a work stream are now not required.
2.2	<p>In summary the work stream have been delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in Care Council is now established and working well • Children and Young People are involved in a range of activities and these are reported at each meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board. • Children and Young People attend the Corporate Parenting Board regularly and a schedule of meetings is in place. • The pool of trainers for the Respect training programme has increased and this has increased the availability of training for staff and members. • Children and Young People are now routinely involved in the recruitment activity across the Directorate. • The Children in Care Council has an improved footprint on social media. • Children in Care Council have established strong links with regional and national forums, including the National Benchmarking Leaving Care Forum. • Children in Care Council have been fully involved in the Transformation Delivery Programme, for example, the “Big Conversation” and the development of the Turning Point Service.
2.3	<p>Actions in progress:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Children in Care and Care Leavers survey is underway and the outcome of this will report to the Directorate Management Team and Corporate Parenting Board in 2020. 2. The Council’s website material has been prepared and is ready to be updated in line with the wider plan for Children’s Services. 3. Review our Pledges: A task and finish group has been set up to review our Pledges with children and Young People. This will involve young people and will lead to co-production workshop/s with the Children in Care Council, elected members, our carers, staff and colleagues is Health, Housing and Education providers <p>The co-production workshop/s will be scheduled in February 2020 and will inform the Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2020 – 2023.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Implementation of the Restorative approach across Children’s Services has appropriately transferred to the Children’s Transformation Plan and a Restorative Lead is supporting this implementation across the Directorate.
3.0	<p>Home – a good, safe and stable place to live: Our Pledge to children, young people and care leavers is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help care leavers find and keep a stable place to live.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
3.1	<p>Update: This work stream group has continued to meet and the actions set out in the work plan has now been delivered. The work plan and the membership of the Group needs to be reviewed.</p> <p>In summary the following has been delivered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mocking Bird is operational and now has three established hubs with a forth scheduled for 2020. • Workshops with foster carers and residential staff have been delivered and routinely offered to promote preparation for independence and the use of the Catch 22 toolkit. • The training and development offer for foster carers is published and is now reviewed operationally by the Group Manager. • Staying Close Policy has been developed and agreed. • Foster Carer Recruitment and Retention Strategy is in place and is kept under review by the Fostering Steering Group. • Council Tax exemption provided for Care Leavers up to the age of 25 in Walsall • Joint Housing and Children's Housing Protocol for Care Leavers is in place. • Staying Put is actively promoted and there are currently 23 children who remain with their foster carers' as they transition into adulthood. • Children's services have jointly commissioned housing accommodation options with Housing. A Housing Pathway Panel was established in 2019 and works in partnership with Housing, Walsall Housing Group and St Basils to support care leavers to secure suitable accommodation. This has secured a supply of accommodation for care leavers and a housing pathway that meets the needs of young people. • Increased the number of personal advisors by 2 to ensure young people are supported. • Turning Point (Specialist Adolescent Support Service) has been developed with children and young people, staff have been appointed and the service will be fully operational.
3.2	<p>Action in progress:</p> <p>A review of this work stream will be undertaken to review our priorities and agree its work plan by January 2020</p> <p>The recruitment and retention strategy for foster carers is under review and will report to the Directorate Management Team in 2020.</p>

	A review of Staying Put arrangements is now scheduled to commence in January 2020.
4.0	<p>Education, training and employment- Our pledge to children, young people and care leavers is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Help care leavers with their career plans.
4.1	<p>Update: This work stream has merged its work plan with the Management Board of the Virtual School to reduce duplication of meetings. The progress of the work plan is tracked by the Head of the Virtual School and reports to this Board as well as the Directorate Management Team. The Management Board meets termly.</p> <p>The Head of the Virtual School provides an annual report to the Management Board.</p> <p>The Head of the Virtual School Manager also reports to the Corporate Parenting Board and last reported on 8 January 2019.</p>
4.2	<p>The work stream has delivered on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new ePEP system implemented and is fully operational • Improved quality and timeliness of Personal Education Plans with 92% completed within timescales at July 2019, compared with 70% at July 2018. • There are more Children and Young People aged 16-18 in education and training. • Attainment in KS1 has improved in reading, writing and maths • Attainment in KS2 has improved in writing, maths and grammar, punctuation and spelling • The number of children achieving a good set of GCSEs has increased from 23.5% in 2018 to 27% in 2019 • Apprenticeships: The Council has created 20 opportunities for Care Leavers in a wide range of areas, such as, Resources and Transformation - Money Home Job, Finance, Children's Services, Economy and Environment, Black Country Impact/Walsall Works, Business Support, Clean and Green as well as an external opportunity at Walsall Football Club. There are currently 6 young people on the programme; 3 have completed first level programmes and have progressed. Our first Higher Apprenticeship Care Leaver has been recruited into Money Home Job and this is at Foundation Degree level. The 'distance travelled' has been significant for the young people. • 18 young people are currently in higher education and at University.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Impact worker is attached to the TLC Hub and is available to support young people in securing training and employment • Rate of young people aged 19-21 who are in education or training has reduced over the last 12 months. • The young people are reviewed and their progress is tracked by the NEET Action Group, chaired by the Head of the Virtual.
4.2	<p>Actions :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on the education progress of children in care to be scheduled in 2020. • Apprenticeship opportunities with Tarmac and Health are currently being explored
5.0	<p>Good health and wellbeing: Our pledge to children, young people and care leavers is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As you grow up you will be asked for your opinion on your health needs and will be involved in decision making about 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. • We will go to medical appointments with you if you are worried to go alone.
5.1	<p>Update: This work stream continues to meet and is jointly chaired by the Designated Nurse for Looked After Children and the Designated Doctor for Looked After Children. Its work plan is currently under review to ensure that it reflects the current priorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has successfully recruited a Designated Nurse for Looked after Children to support the CCG in fulfilling their responsibilities as commissioner of services to improve the health of looked after children. • The Designated Nurse is a statutory role and this has started to make an impact on improving relationships and practice. • Appointment of Health Nurse to increase capacity in the Looked After Children Health Team. • The Transition and Leaving Care Nurse offers weekly drop in and health appointments at the TLC Hub. • The FLASH service offers a fortnightly drop in at the TLC Hub • Over a hundred Primary Care staff, including ninety-three General Practitioners, have received training around their responsibilities for looked after children. • Data and performance is shared across the LA, the Trust and CCG and performance of health assessments is improving.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop with Children's Services Staff and Health Staff have been held to improve health assessment processes completed.
5.2	<p>Ongoing development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Designated Nurse for Looked After Children is revising the work plan in conjunction with colleagues in Health and Local Authority. The review of the post-16 Review Health Assessment (RHA) Personal Health Plan and Summary report is in progress. Continued monitoring of health assessments and health passports for care leavers is monitored monthly by the CCG and LA. Review of the FLASH service is in progress.
5.3	<p>Action: The Designated Nurse for Children Looked After to provide a report on the revised work plan to Corporate Parenting Board.</p>
6.0	<p>Lifestyle and Leisure: Our pledge to children, young people and care leavers is :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will make sure you have the opportunity to take part in sporting activities, youth clubs and other social activities without facing barriers or obstacles. Your passport application will be treated as a priority for children in a long term placement. We will make sure you have your leisure card. Contact with people who are important to you will be actively promoted and arrangements will clearly take into account your wishes and feelings.
6.1	<p>Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leisure cards are available via the TLC Hub or via MyPlace to enable children and young people and their carers to secure access to leisure facilities in the Walsall area easily. Passport applications are funded by Children's Services and social workers are supported to ensure that applications are progressed with good administrative and tracking support. The new Family Time Service is fully operational and has now moved to Fallings Heath which provides an improved family friendly environment for children and families. The contact policy is operational. Catch 22 preparation for independence toolkit is used and is promoted in the training offer for carers and staff. Children in Care Council have worked with the managers of the Independent Reviewing Service to develop reports that are more accessible for children and young people.
6.2	<p>Actions in progress:</p> <p>The Interim Assistant Director has reviewed the use of WhatsApp as a means to communication between staff and children and young people.</p>

7.0	<p>In summary, There are some actions still in progress and these have been identified in the report. A wider review of the work programme of the Corporate Parenting Board is required.</p> <p>The Corporate Parenting Strategy needs to be reviewed and updated by April 2020. The work plan for the Corporate Parenting Board will be informed by the review.</p> <p>The timescales for the completion of this review is April 2020.</p>