

**Title of the Report: Children in Care Council update**

**Executive Summary:**

***Reason for bringing to the Corporate Parenting Board:***

*To provide the Board with an update on the progress 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 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 appointment of a dedicated officer was agreed in 2018 and the Children's Champion was appointed in May 2018.

The response to drive improvements plays a key role in the quality of life and outcomes for the children, young people and families of Walsall

**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 working with the range of children looked after and care experienced young people to refresh and reconstitute the Council4Kids. A report on the work plan of the Children's Champion has been developed and reports to the Director of Children's Services every 3 months, Corporate Parenting Board Steering Group which is chaired in the Assistant Director.

**Reducing inequalities:**

The report 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

**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**

- 1.0** The Children in Care Council is a forum where young people looked after by Walsall are able to shape and influence the parenting they receive at every level. The Council 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.
- 1.1** Walsall has an active Children in Care Council with currently 12 active young people who can participate within group settings, consultation or virtually. We have a diverse range of members whose ages range between 11 and 18 years, and we are continuing to recruit new members. Three current members are active apprentices within Walsall Council.
- 1.2** We also have a young person currently undertaking work experience within the Participation Team and actively engaging in consultations
- 2.0** The Children in Care Council now meets every three weeks to discuss issues that matter to them and to update the Council of work undertaken within different services.
- 2.1** Refreshments are provided at each meeting and members are given vouchers as an incentive when they attend regular and to say thank for their time.
- 2.4** We are continuing to promote the Children In Care Council 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.
- 3.0** The Children's Champion and a young person will speak to children and young people who are interested in becoming members prior to attendance. The purpose of the Children In Care Council will be explained to ensure they have an understanding of the Council.

### **3.1 Constitution and Term of Reference**

The Constitution and Terms have Reference have been completed (see Appendix 1). This will be available to members of the Children In Care Council.

### **3.2 Diary of events**

The diary is now planned three months in advance. Invitations will be sent out through appropriate channels of communications and to the Corporate Parenting Board. The programme is developed 6 months in advance and will be reviewed in March 2019.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Children In Care Council</b>
20 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2018	Introduction and Induction for members
11 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2018	Children In Care Council
8 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2019	Meeting with the Corporate Parenting Board
29 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2019	CICC (KICFM) Cancelled - to be rescheduled.
19 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2019	CICC - Work on review of the Pledge
12 <sup>th</sup> Mar 2019	Residential Managers Jason Grainger and Liz Gosling
2 <sup>nd</sup> Apr 2019	Heads Of Service (TBC)
15 <sup>th</sup> Apr 2019	Meeting with the Corporate Parenting Board
23 <sup>rd</sup> Apr 2019	Virtual School (TBC)

Activity that Young People have been involved:		
Young Peoples' Interview Panel for Heads of Service in December 2018.	<p>Young people aged between 10 to 21 years participated.</p> <p>Young people met as a group with the support of the Children's Champion and put together a set of questions designed to support the interview process.</p> <p>The young people were happy they were able to influence the decision making as they felt both candidates they selected demonstrated they could help improve the services. The young people reported they enjoyed the experience.</p>	CICC Children
Young Peoples' Bench Marking Forum	Care leavers were invited by the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum to present at Horsham Young Peoples' Bench Marking Forum "The Similar Story Similar Voice Project".	Care Leaver Children's Champion
Consultation for Walsall Right 4 Children Logo colours	As part of the Walsall's transformation programme, young people from the Respect Group and CICC were consulted on the logo colours.	CICC Respect Group
Walsall Children's Safeguarding Board - participation in consultation panel	<p>The young people are working with the Walsall Children's Safeguarding Board to be fourth partners.</p> <p>CICC have co-designed a poster to recruit members.</p>	<p>CICC Young People</p> <p>WCSB</p>

	Consultation will be with a mix of young people with different experiences in order for a more balanced view.	
Constitution	Children in Care Council constitution completed and agreed.	CICC
Consultation	<p>Young people have been involved in the transformation programme and are being consulted around co-designing a service for an adolescence service.</p> <p>Meetings have been fortnightly. Young people have discussed issues arising during a child's journey in order to access the appropriate support for the service, giving examples of their own lived experience.</p> <p>Young people aged between 11 and 24 years have been involved.</p> <p>Selected young people will be part of an advisory group at the next stage of the consultation and will be involved at each step to ensure the service offers the right support for young people.</p>	<p>CICC</p> <p>Beverley Barnett Jones</p> <p>Children's Champion</p>
Pledge	Work has now started on reviewing and updating the pledge.	CICC
Diary of events	Diary planned by the young people up to three months in advance.	CICC
Care Covenant Advisory Panel	We have young people who are part of the Care Leavers Covenant who are being consulted on around their expertise of Care Leavers.	Young people

### **3.3 Drop-in support 18 to 25 year olds**

The Transition and Leaving Care Hub have a drop-in for care leavers aged between 18 and 25 years. This is run fortnightly on Tuesdays and gives care leavers the opportunity to speak to Personal Advisors or a space where they can mix with other care leavers.

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service is also available for extra support if they are feeling anxious or stressed.

The Transition and Leaving Care Nurse has regular presence at the Hub to be available for children in care and care leavers.

### 3.4 Half Term Activity Run through Virtual School

Additional activities are available over half term children in care

Monday 18 <sup>th</sup> Feb	West African Drumming and Art
Tuesday 19 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Caricature Drawing
Wednesday 20 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Photography-
Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup> Feb	Photography-
Friday 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Dance

### 3.5 Issues raised by the young people.

#### Housing

- Young people state transition is hard as you do not know where you will be when you are 18 and cannot make a semi-independent flat your own or feel homely with decorations. It would be helpful if Tenancy for Care Leavers should be able to start sooner at 17 years and 6 months.

#### Support to move home

- Removal van support should be provided cost free to Care leavers when moving this appears not to be always consistent.

In order to further explore this issue with the Children in Care Council, the Group Manager and TLC managers will attend their next meeting on 19 February 2019.

### 3.6 Compliments from Children in Care and Care leavers

Feedback about the quality of the service that children in care and care leavers receive is also captured in the compliments about social workers and personal advisors in the last 2 months.

*'I just want to say that I really appreciate everything she has done for me and I want J to know that she's appreciated a lot and I'm very grateful for the fact that's she's my PA! I wouldn't have it any other way'.*

*'Thank you for everything that you and the care team have done for me over the past few years, it's all appreciated more than you could imagine. I'd also like to say that K was the best social worker that I could have asked for and anyway who has the privilege to meet him is a very lucky person'.*

*Thank you card to staff at Townend House for sorting her passport. 'growing up was not the best but you showed her that there are good social workers out there'. (From a YP who is moving out of Walsall to Wales and wanted to say a thank you to you for everything you did)*

## **Walsall's Children In Care Council Constitution**

### **Purpose**

- The Children in Care Council is a group of children and young people with care experience who come together to reflect the views of all care experienced children and young people in Walsall.
- The Children in Care Council will work towards achieving positive change and better outcomes for all children and young people by working in partnership with Walsall Council and other organisations.
- The Children in Care Council will enable other children and young people to have the best possible opportunities in their lives and advocate where appropriate.

### **Membership**

- Children and young people between the ages of 11 and 21 years who are interested in helping the group to achieve the aims and will abide by the constitution and rules of the group will form members of the council.
- Older members will be part of the Care Leavers Forum.
- The group will meet every three weeks at an agreed time and venue.
- Refreshments will be provided at all group meetings.
- Members are rewarded for their time and transport provided where possible.
- Any member of the Children in Care Council may resign their membership at any time by giving the Chair written notice (i.e. text, email, etc.).

### **Position & Roles**

- The council will be made up of 12 active members who can also be virtual members.
- There will be an elected Chair (which can be rotated); a Treasurer, and a Vice Chair. There will be other voluntary roles which the council deem necessary.

### **Equal Opportunities**

- Walsall's Children in Care Council will not discriminate and will treat all members equally regardless of colour, race, gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

## **Duties of the Children In Care Council**

The council will fulfil the purpose by:

- Meeting with key decision makers, attending Corporate Parenting Board at minimum twice a year.
- Create working links with the key sections, Independent Reviewing Officers, Virtual School, Fostering and Care Leaving Teams, other corporate parents, and important organisations.
- Hold surveys, and where appropriate have meetings with Walsall children and young people living within or outside of the local area; look at statistics of children and young people on issues that affect them to improve the services.
- Getting involved in checking and monitoring services for children and young people.
- Getting involved in the recruitment of staff through interview panels.
- Attend relevant regional and national events and forums.
- Represent views of children and young people in consultations, conference's, workshops, focus groups etc.
- Children in Care Council will use their budget to consult children and young people, raise the profile of the Council, hold meetings and deliver training for foster carers, staff, councillors, and other agencies.
- Children in Care Council will use the website to update children and young people on their developments.
- Children in Care Council will hold activity days for children and young people thorough out the year.

## **Conduct**

- The Children in Care Council may suspend or terminate the membership of any member if his/her conduct is deemed to be damaging to the interests of the Council.
- The participation worker will advise, assist and support on the membership of the Council.
- Children in Care Council will always offer a flexible approach.

**The constitution was agreed by members of the Council in January 2019.**

## **Terms of Reference**



## **Mission Statement**

The Children In Care Council will work towards achieving positive change and better outcomes for all children and young people by working in partnership with Walsall Council and other organisations and ensuring their voices are heard.

## **Purpose**

- Our main purpose is to influence work by the Council and partners, which will enhance the positive outcomes for children and young people who have been looked after.
- To enable direct information sharing between corporate parents and looked after children.
- To enable children in care to achieve a consistent personal input to the reporting processes of the Corporate Parenting Board.
- Children and looked after young people meet directly with the Director of Children's Services and attend the Corporate Parenting Board a minimum of twice a year.
- To ensure Children in Care Council meetings and events are fun and engaging for all young people.
- Raise any issues which affect any children and young people in care.
- To ensure that young people take the lead on all relevant projects.

## **Decision Making**

- The Children in Care Council would not have any direct decision-making powers. However, consultation with the group members would influence decisions made at planning, management meetings, interview panels and groups affecting looked after children.
- The Children in Care Council may also contribute directly to other groups, depending on the agenda of issues that it develops. The group should have the opportunity to link and feedback to operational managers on policy issues as these arise on the Children in Care Council agenda. The Council may invite guests to attend to discuss specific items of concern.
- The tasks of the group will be to establish the priority concerns of the young people and to create an agenda from that.

## **Membership**

- Chairperson – Elected young person of the Children in Care Council on a rota basis (3 monthly)
- Deputy Chair – Elected young person of the Children in Care Council
- Twelve active members made up of children in care, leaving care and with care experience.

### **Meetings**

- The Council will meet every three weeks at agreed venue with refreshments provided.
- An annual event will be undertaken to celebrate achievement for all looked after children.
- Any child who has been looked after will have the right to attend the Children in Care Council meetings.

### **Code of Conduct**

- Members of the Children in Care Council agree to treat each other, workers, and visiting adults with respect and represent the views of and wishes of all children in care to their very best.
- Any incidents of bullying, sexism, racism or other non-inclusive behaviours during the Children in Care Council meetings will result in exclusion from the Children in Care Council at the discretion the elected Children in Care Council Chairperson and Children's Champion.
- All Children in Care Council meetings will have minutes.

