

## **BRIEFING NOTE**

**TO: Children's Scrutiny & Performance Panel**

**DATE: October 2014**

**RE: Corporate Parenting Board**

### **Purpose**

To provide Children's Scrutiny & Performance Panel with an overview of the role and function of the Corporate Parenting board.

### **Background – Overarching context of the Corporate Parenting Board**

Good parents want the best for their children. For children in care, it is the local authority elected members and senior officers who are responsible for ensuring a standard of care that would be good enough for children in their own families. This is known as corporate parenting.

The current iteration of the legal corporate parent responsibility comes from section 22 of the Children Act 1989 which imposes a duty on local authorities to 'safeguard and promote the welfare of each child they look after'.

Whilst the corporate parenting responsibility rests with all councillors, council officers and local agencies, how involved individuals will be may depend on their role with the Director of Children's Services and Lead Members having this as a core function. There are generally three different levels of responsibility:

1. Universal: For all local authority members, staff and local partners including general awareness of governance arrangements and the issues facing looked after children
2. Targeted: for all councillors who visit children's homes or sit on corporate parenting group
3. Specialist: where corporate parenting is at the heart of someone's role.

Whilst corporate parenting can be delivered through a variety of different systems and structures it is recommended that local authorities adopt a 'model of corporate parenting' and that it includes components of:

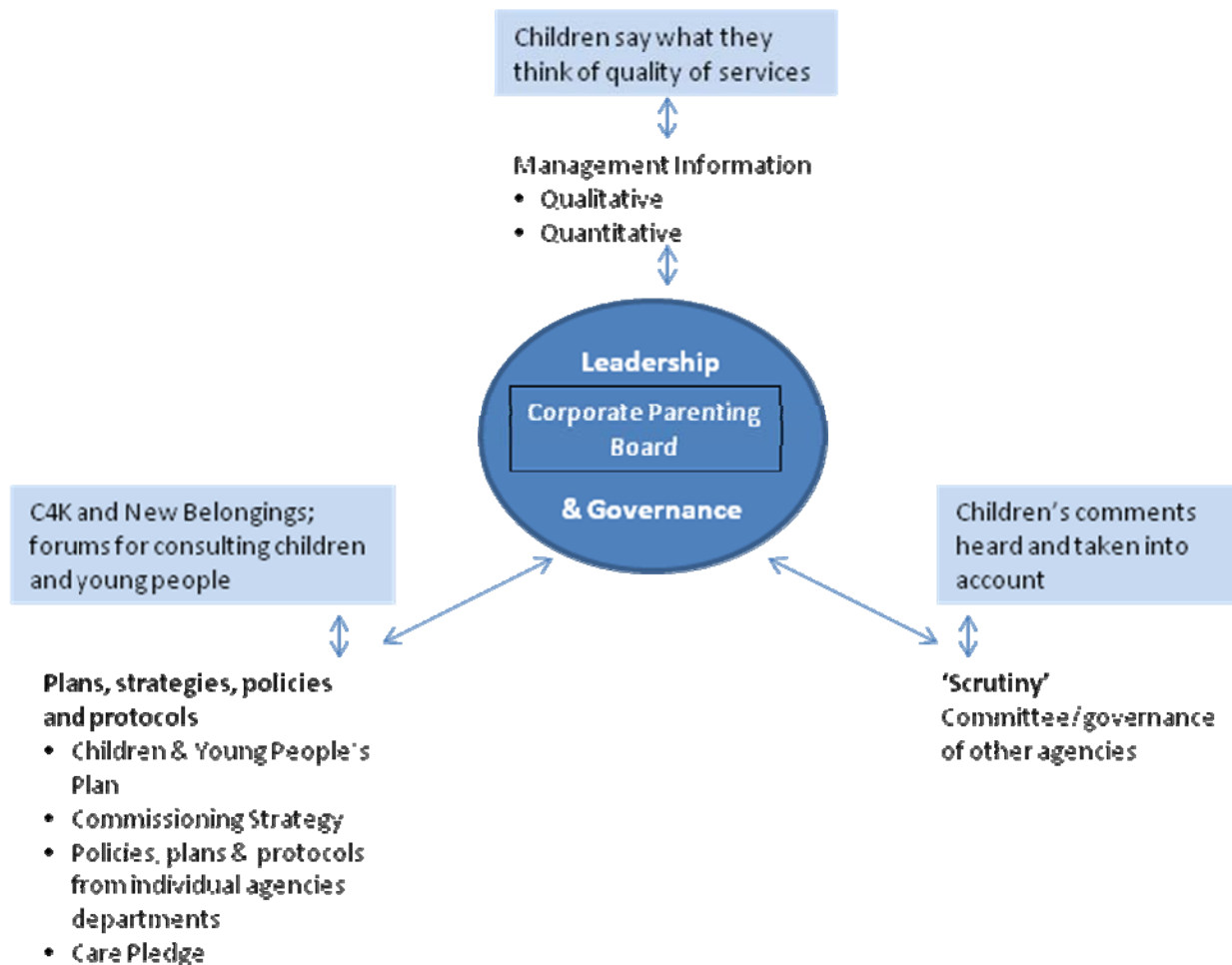
- **Participation** – to ensure the voice of looked after children and care leavers is heard in decision making
- **Leadership and Governance** – through a 'corporate parenting group' and clear roles and responsibilities, lines of accountability and decision making
- **Management information**

The functions of a corporate parenting group can be delivered in various ways including formal committees, scrutiny committees and less formal groups which take an over view of the role or multiagency partnerships.

## The Walsall Model

The current model in Walsall is shown in diagram 1 illustrating the relationship between scrutiny, a multiagency corporate parenting board the Council 4 Kids and the New Belongings group for Care Leavers.

Diagram 1



### The aim of the Corporate Parenting Board:

The board sets out to ensure that the Council, members, services and partner agencies take responsibility for working together to provide the best possible opportunities to children and young people who are in care and care leavers and hold each other to account for making this happen.

In consultation with Council 4 Kids the board has recently refreshed the corporate parenting strategy which sets out the vision and goals for corporate parenting for 2014-2017. This is attached as appendix 1.

## **Role and purpose**

The board has seven key elements to its role and function:

1. To ensure that the whole Council and partner agencies have a joint commitment to corporate parenting in order to achieve continuing improvements in outcomes for children and young people in care and care leavers.
2. To develop, implement, oversee and review the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan to ensure outcomes fulfil the Council's responsibilities towards children and young people in care and care leavers.
3. To oversee and monitor the outcomes for children and young people in care and care leavers in conjunction with the Performance and Scrutiny panel.
4. To ensure children and young people in care and care leavers participate in policy and service development and that their engagement is promoted through their direct involvement with the Corporate Parenting Board and Walsall Children and Young People's Partnership Board arrangements.
5. To determine appropriate consultation with children in care, their carers, and care leavers and ensure their achievements are celebrated.
6. To advise on and monitor:
  - ◆ Plans, strategies or policies for children and young people in care, young people and care leavers to ensure their impact realises the priorities set out in the Walsall children and young people's plan in line with the Children and Young People's Partnership Board outcomes.
  - ◆ The commissioning of services to children and young people in care and care leavers including, but not exclusively, placements, health services, employment opportunities, leisure and culture services, services to young people in care at risk of or involved in offending behaviour and young parents who are or have been in care.
  - ◆ The key performance indicators, educational attainment, and other associated activities in relation to achievements of children and young people in care and care leavers.
  - ◆ Preventative activity for children and young people on the edge of care.
7. To receive regular reports on the provision of work experience opportunities, housing and training services for care leavers.

## **Schedule of Meetings and Administration**

A schedule of meetings is drawn up for the year with meetings taking place at least 6 times although they can be requested more frequently. The Chair of the Board is rotated on an annual basis and a PA for the Director for Children's Services or an Assistant Director provides administrative support. The agenda and papers go out at

least one week before meetings are held. Reports or papers are not accepted on the day.

## **Governance**

The Board produces an annual report including our pledges to looked after children and care leavers which is made available to Children's and Young People's Performance and Scrutiny Panel, Cabinet, Council4Kids, New Belongings Group, Walsall Safeguarding Children Board and the Children and Young People's Partnership Board.

The Board has the overarching responsibility for the governance of the Virtual School. The Virtual School's Management Committee is a sub-group of the Corporate Parenting Board and is required to provide the Board with an annual report.

## **Membership**

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board are expected to make a clear commitment to the meetings; attendance and apologies are recorded and circulated at each meeting. Members can elect an occasional named deputy.

### **Core Membership:**

Portfolio Holder, Children's Services

Labour member champion

Liberal Democrat champion

Executive Director, Children's Services

Assistant Director, Children's Services

Designated Nurse for Looked After Children

Service Manager, CAMHS

Head of Housing, Regeneration Services

Service Manager, Neighbourhoods Services

Group Manager Looked After Children and Care Leavers, Children's Services

Group Manager Assessment, Children's Services

Group Manager Provider Services, Children's Services

Head of Virtual School, Children's Services

Head of Vulnerable Learners, Children's Services

Head of Quality Assurance and performance, Children's Services

Head of Safeguarding and Review, Children's Services

School Link Manager, Walsall College

Council4kids and New Belongings representatives

Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) representative

Integrated Young People's Support Services (IYPSS) representative

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**Walsall Council**

**Walsall Children's Services**

## **Walsall Looked After Children Strategy 2014 -2017**

**Improving Outcomes for our Looked After Children and  
Care Leavers**

**Better Together for Children**

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**Delivering, monitoring and reviewing our action plan**

## Introduction

We are delighted to introduce this strategy, **“Improving Outcomes for our Looked After Children and Care Leavers”**.

Our looked after children come to us for all sorts of reasons. Together Walsall Council and its partners are committed to ensuring that every looked after child has the best possible start in life and that every care leaver continues to receive the support they need to help them make a success of their life as adults.

The priorities in this strategy are drawn from what we know about services for looked after children and care leavers and what our Looked After Children and Care Leavers have told us is important to them and the areas they feel we need to improve on.

We have reviewed and further developed our pledges, including for the first time a set of pledges to our care leavers. Each pledge represents a promise given by Walsall Council and its partners about the quality of care and support that every looked after child and Walsall care leaver can expect.

**Improving Outcomes for our Looked After Children and Care Leavers** will require all agencies to work together to deliver these promises. The strategy describes the various actions and contributions required from all partners to further improve the outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. Such a joined up approach is only possible when everyone understands and accepts their responsibilities for this group of children and young people. The delivery of these promises will be actively monitored and reviewed by the Corporate Parenting Board.

The strength of this Strategy lies in the continued active engagement of both Council 4 Kids and New Belongings and we are committed to ensuring that we build upon this involvement so that we monitor and deliver in partnership with our looked after children and care leavers.

We have high aspirations for our children; we listen to their views, wishes, hopes and concerns and will work with them to achieve their goals and the best possible outcomes for all our looked after children and care leavers here in Walsall.

C’llor Barbara Cassidy  
Portfolio Holder for  
Children’s Services

Rebecca Jenkins –Cliff  
Chairperson  
Council 4 Kids

David Haley  
Executive Director  
Children’s Services

## **Our Vision**

Walsall Council and its partners believe that a child is best brought up within his or her own birth family wherever possible. If a child is unable to live with their birth family Walsall Council is committed to finding a permanent alternative family who can offer safe and stable care throughout the duration of a child's life and into adulthood as soon as possible.

This means that we want all our children and young people to have every opportunity that good parents want for their children.

We want our children to be happy and healthy both physically and emotionally, to be safe and protected from harm and exploitation. We want them to feel they are loved and valued for who they are.

We want them to enjoy learning and to participate on the decisions affecting their care and their lives. This includes making the transition into adulthood with support, being able to access fulfilling jobs and higher education, live in good housing and be financially secure and enjoy positive relationships.

Above all we want our children to fulfil the goals and ambitions they set for themselves and ultimately provide good parenting for their own children.

Through our strategy we want to work with a common purpose so that we are:

### **Better Together for Children**

## Our Pledges to Looked After Children

The Corporate Parenting Board has agreed following **key pledges** for and with children and young people, dedicated to improving the services they receive and their life chances. A pledge is a promise and we will help children to improve their attainment and have good opportunities, similar to children with fortunate home circumstances, through the following pledges:

- Looked after children will be involved in decisions made about them when they reach an appropriate age ~ this means children and young people will have their say
- We will always promote stability and encourage placements wherever possible
- Passport applications will be treated as a priority for children in long term placements so they can take part in daily activities without discrimination ~ this means they won't feel picked on
- We will make sure that information is presented in a child friendly manner ~ this means we will make sure information makes sense to children and young people
- We will support Walsall Council 4 Kids and New Belongings to make sure that looked after children in Walsall have their voices heard
- We will support opportunities for further education and apprenticeship schemes for all looked after children
- We will support children to make sure they are healthy and are supported to access all the health services they need ~ this means they are given good advice and guidance if needed.
- We will improve the quality of training for foster carers to ensure their skills are updated and they provide a consistent standard of care ~ this means that foster carers are supported to be as good as they can be
- All looked after children will have access to sporting activities, youth clubs and other social activities without facing barriers or obstacles
- Members of the Corporate Parenting Board will meet with Council 4 Kids monthly
- All looked after children will be updated about their rights every year

## **Care Leavers**

Walsall Council and its partners are committed to preventing social exclusion amongst care leavers. The transition to adulthood is complex and can be challenging for all young people. It can be even more complex for young people who have been looked after

As Corporate Parents we are committed to ensuring that those young people who have been in our care are supported as they move towards adulthood and enter it feeling confident about their future.

We have signed up to the Care Leavers Charter, a set of principles and promises drawn up by young people and the government for central and local government.

We know there is more to do and through our Strategy we want to work with our care leavers to develop a set of local pledges across our partnership.

We know there is more to do and for the first time the Corporate Parenting Board has agreed following **key pledges** for and with care leavers through the New Belongings group which are dedicated to improving the support we provide for care leavers as they take their first steps as adults

### **Respect me as an individual**

Treat care leavers with respect, and as the individual people they are. Try not to make care leavers people that they will never be, or make them into people that the local authority would like them to be.

### **Don't judge me because of my past (or my family's past), but believe in my future**

Don't judge care leavers on the mistakes that they, or their family, have made in the past. There's every chance that a care leaver (with some help and support) will be a success in the future e.g. be a good parent, hold down a job, achieve on a course, live on their own.

### **Keep me informed**

Tell care leavers about their entitlements. Tell them in advance what will happen when they are 21 and prepare them for this. Tell care leavers the reasons behind decisions that are made for them e.g. placement moves, financial decisions.

### **Encourage me to do things by myself, but hold my hand when I need it**

Care leavers do need to learn to do things by themselves, but sometimes they do need someone to hold their hand when they are scared or nervous, or don't understand e.g. first time at jobcentre, a medical appointment. Help them with their budgeting; don't just expect them to know how to do it. When they move into a new property, help them work out how to pay the bills, read the meter, work out how to use the washing machine. Help them apply for benefits as they don't always understand how or why to do it. Encourage care leavers to do the things that they find difficult by themselves e.g. phone calls, but be there with them the first few times.

### **Help me find and keep a stable home**

Find care leavers properties (particularly supported housing) in areas or buildings which are nice and, most importantly, safe. Help us learn about independence skills for when we grow up and have a family.

### **Listen to me**

Listen to what care leavers have to say, even if it's just to get things off their chest. Care leavers often know what is best for them, but if they do get things wrong let them talk about it without an "I told you so". Let care leavers be included in decisions. If a decision has to be made, discuss it with the care leaver and give them time to think about it, don't expect a decision straight away.

### **Help me with my career plans**

Help care leavers get onto courses that they are interested in. Help prepare care leavers for job applications and interviews. Find work experience and work trials for care leavers. Also, prioritise care leavers for jobs and apprenticeships at the council. It's hard for care leavers to get and keep a job, but the council will probably judge care leavers less and give them a helping hand.

### **Spend time with me**

Spend time with care leavers; try not to spend your time with them in a rush. Talk to them about things other than just problems - get to know them, chat with them and spend social time with them. This helps build up good and trusting relationships, and teaches them good social skills. Still chat to them and involve them even when they are too old for the service.

### **Help me with my health needs**

Make it easier and quicker for care leavers to access mental health and counselling services. It would be great if there was someone that care leavers can just drop in on and talk to. Help care leavers learn how to keep safe in the home and in the community. Have sexual health advice available to care leavers, and somewhere they can access free contraception.

## Who Are We?

We want all our children and young people to have everything that good parents want for their children.



## **Our Strategy for looked after children**

This is our commitment as Corporate Parents which we make to every child in our care regardless of their age, ability, background and whether they are placed inside or outside Walsall boundaries.

**Respect and Involvement:** everyone involved with our children and young people will treat them with respect, listening to their views and explaining clearly why some things cannot happen if that is the case. Children and young people are involved in and understand the decisions that are made about their lives. They know how to get information, support and advice they need when they need it and they know how to complain.

**Home:** children, young people and care leavers are in good, safe homes where they feel cared for, safe and supported and can stay for as long as they need to. They receive information about their placement in advance and are listened to if they have concerns about their placement at any time. Their placement feels like home. We will support care leavers to 'stay put' if that is what they and their foster carer want.

**Education:** children and young people receive a planned and supportive education from early years through to higher education. They are supported to fulfil their educational ambitions and have high aspiration for their future.

**Health:** the health needs of children and young people are assessed and planned for. This includes their emotional well being. They are supported to access all the health services they require and given good advice and guidance. They are well and happy and choose healthy, active and positive lifestyles.

**Leisure:** children, young people and care leavers are supported and encouraged to enjoy a wide range of leisure, cultural, sport and social activity which will enable them to fulfil their potential and make new friends.

**Moving to Adulthood:** children and young people are supported as they move towards adulthood and enter it feeling confident about their future. Those leaving care will have a home to live in, life skills to look after themselves and be supported to continue in education whether that is through training, an apprenticeship or higher education so that they can earn a living to support themselves.

**Corporate Parenting:** Walsall Council and its partners recognise their responsibilities towards children and young people who are looked after and care leavers. They act as good parents would in any family and ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities in listening to looked after children and young people and care leavers and in supporting access to leisure and cultural activities, a healthy lifestyle, housing, work experience and employment opportunities.

## **Respect and Involvement**

Everyone involved with our children and young people will treat them with respect, listening to their views and explaining clearly why some things cannot happen if that is the case. Children and young people are involved in and understand the decisions that are made about their lives. They know how to get information, support and advice they need when they need it and they know how to complain.

## **Our Pledge to Children and Young People in our Care and Care Leavers says**

- You will have your own worker who is reliable, trustworthy and will treat you with respect
- You will be involved in decisions made about you
- You know how to get information, support and advice you need when you need it including information about how to complain if you are not happy

## **What we know about looked after children's experience nationally**

- **Nearly two thirds of the children (64%) said their opinions were usually or always asked on things that mattered to them**
- **Ten percent said their opinions were not usually, or never, asked**
- **55% said their opinions usually or always made a difference to decisions about their lives**
- **94% of the children in care said they have a social worker, and another 3% had another sort of caseworker (such as a leaving care worker or support worker)**

(Children's Care Monitor 2013/14)

## **What we know locally**

- **We have 7 active members of C4K**
- **It is a challenge to engage children and young people in becoming active members of C4K**
- **We have a newly developed group for Care Leavers called New Belongings**

## **What we have done**

- We have delivered 'Total Respect' Training with looked after young people and care leavers to help those adults involved in the life of a looked after child understand what it is like to be looked after
- If your IRO believes there is a delay in your plan then they make sure this receives the right attention

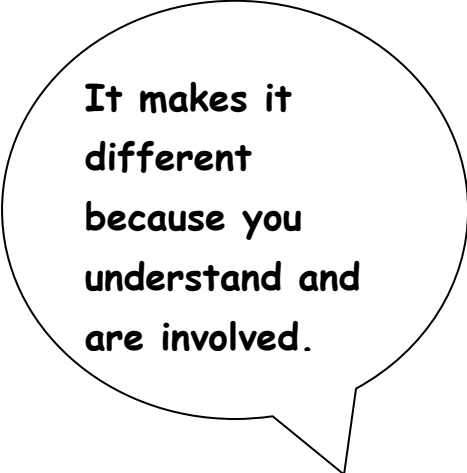
## **What we are going to do next**

- We will continue to deliver 'Total Respect' Training

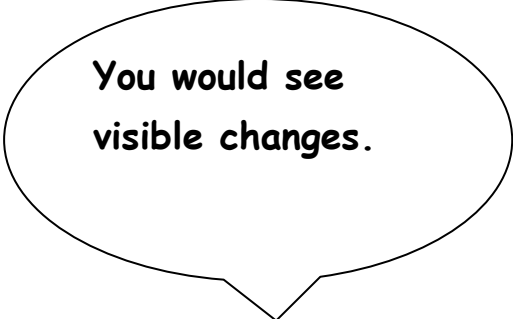
- We will develop introductory visiting cards with a picture of your IRO so that you have the details of your IRO and know what they do. Once you have their card you can contact your IRO whenever you want to speak to them or want to check something out ~ they love to hear from you.
- Every child and young person will have a care or pathway plan and at your review your IRO will ensure it is up to date, that progress is being made and your plan is inspirational for you.

### **How we will know we have succeeded**


- The number of children who attend and contribute to their review will increase
- The number of children who speak with the IRO outside their review will increase



**It makes it  
different  
because you  
understand and  
are involved.**



**You would see  
visible changes.**



**My contact  
doesn't happen  
and all I get is  
"sorry".**

## **Home**

Children, young people and care leavers are in good, safe homes where they feel cared for, safe and supported and can stay for as long as they need to. They receive information about their placement in advance and are listened to if they have concerns about their placement at any time. Their placement feels like home. We will support care leavers to 'stay put' if that is what they and their foster carers want.

## **Our Pledge to children, young people and care leavers says**

- We will support placements to reduce the number of moves for you as much as possible
- We will provide our foster carers with training and support so they can be as good as they can be
- We will support care leavers to Stay Put if that is what you and your foster carers want

## **What we know about looked after children's experience nationally**

- **83% of children said that they were in the right placement for them**
- **9% said that the placement they were in was not right for them**
- **88% of foster children thought they were in the right placement for them compared with 70% of children in children's homes**
- **92% of the children and young people surveyed in 2013 said they felt very safe or fairly safe in the buildings in which they lived**

(Children's Care Monitor 2013/14)

## **What we know locally**

- **As at the end of March 2014, 9% of looked after children had 3 or more placements in 12 months and 67% who had been in care for 2.5+ years had been in a stable placement for at least 2 years**
- **8 care leavers stayed with their former foster carer in 2013/14**

## **What we have done:**

- We deliver a training programme for our foster carers called KEEP which looks at how best to support children experiencing behavioural difficulties.
- We have worked hard with our children's homes to enable them to meet the required standards and keep children safe
- We have produced a guide to foster care for children and young people
- We have produced welcome packs for our children's homes
- We have developed a Foster Carer's Recruitment Plan to recruit more foster carers for children in Walsall, particularly sibling groups and older children

### **What we are going to do next**

- Review our Staying Put policy and publicise the outcome
- Continue to recruit more foster carers so that there are more opportunities for our looked after children to stay together with their brothers and sisters

### **How we will know we have succeeded**

- Fewer looked after children will have unplanned placement moves
- We will have improved the placement stability of our looked after children
- We will have increased the number of young people who have chosen to stay put with their foster carers after the age of 18
- Our looked after children and our care leavers will tell us that their choice of accommodation has increased and that they feel safe and supported in their home

**Don't be moved  
that much and  
ask why they  
are being moved  
that much.**

**You know what's  
right for you.**

**Is the  
child  
happy?**

**Is the carer happy to  
care for the child?**

**My foster carer is  
teaching me to cook.**

**They tell you that you are part  
of the family and then they go  
away on holiday and leave you.**

**Education:**

Children and young people receive a planned and supportive education from early years through to higher education. They are supported to fulfil their educational ambitions and have high aspiration for their future.

**Our pledge to children, young people and care leavers says:**

- We will challenge schools to provide you with the best chance to do as well as you can in school
- We will support and develop opportunities for further education and apprenticeship schemes for you

**What we know about looked after children's experience nationally**

- **88% of the children rated their education as good or very good**
- **2% rated it as bad or very bad**
- **81% of the children and young people in education told us they were doing well or very well in their education**

(Children's Care Monitor 2013/14)

**What we know locally**

- **68% of our looked after children attend a school which is judged by Ofsted to be good or better**
- **There have been no permanent exclusions for a looked after child for the last 8 years (2008 – 2014)**
- **17% of looked after children achieved 5 or more GCSEs at A\*-C including English and maths in 2013**
- **89% of personal education plans were reviewed on time in 2012/13 (2013/14 figures to be confirmed)**

**What we have done**

- Arranged for all Walsall primary and secondary schools to have first day provision in place for looked after children who receive a fixed term exclusion
- Supported year 11 pupils with their GCSE coursework
- Ensured that when a looked after child moves school they are placed in a good or outstanding school if it is the best school to meet their holistic needs
- Careful monitoring of children in Early years
- Have a robust attendance monitoring process in place to ensure that looked after children do not miss education
- Provided focussed in class support to looked after children working just below their expected levels of attainment

### **What we are going to do next**

- Increase support and challenge to schools to ensure that looked after children are making expected or better progress and the gap between them and their peers is narrowing
- Ensure that the Pupil Premium is being used effectively to raise attainment and aspirations of looked after children
- Ensure year 11 pupils have 3 personal education plan meetings a year to ensure they are on track to achieve their predicted GCSE grades
- Increase our participation with looked after young people post 16 to ensure they are in appropriate provision and that they are supported as they move towards adulthood
- Support and challenge schools to ensure that C4K can evidence that they regularly address the educational experiences raised by looked after children and is able to respond effectively to such issues

### **How we will know we have succeeded**

- The attainment gap between looked after children and their peers will have narrowed
- Pupil premium will have been spent on appropriate interventions designed to narrow the attainment gap
- Attainment at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 will increase
- All year 11 pupils will achieve their predicted GCSE grades
- The number of young people going into training, apprenticeships, further and higher education will increase
- Schools respond to requests to follow up any concerns raised through C4K

**I will get a good job.**

**It's good having Connexions helping me to decide what to do next.**

**Children will see what their education means.**

**The work experience is really good.**

## Health

The health needs of children and young people are assessed and met. This includes their emotional well being. They are supported to access all the health services they need. They are given good advice and guidance if needed. They are happy and well and choose active, healthy and positive lifestyles.

## Our pledge to children, young people and care leavers says:

- You will be given the right health care at the right time to meet your health needs to help you stay as healthy as possible
- You will be supported to make good choices about a healthy lifestyle
- As you grow up you will be asked for your opinion on your health needs
- You will be involved in making decisions about your health

## What we know about looked after children's experience nationally

- **85% of the children thought they were healthy or very healthy**
- **71% of care leavers rated themselves healthy or very healthy**
- **50% of children in children's homes, 45% of foster children said they had mental health or emotional problems, compared with 47% of all children and young people in the survey**
- **54% of care leavers said they had mental health or emotional problems.**  
(Children's Care Monitor 2013/14)
- **Health assessments for care leavers are often missing**  
(Catch 22 National Care Advisory Service – Walsall Council Leaving Care Diagnostic March 2014)

## What we know locally

- **72% of initial health assessments were completed within timescale in 2013/14**
- **92% of looked after children were up to date with their immunisations, 5% less than their peers in the wider community**
- **96% of looked after children were up to date with their dental checks**
- **39% of looked after children had a strengths and difficulties questionnaire completed in 2013/14**
- **Over 90% of looked after children have received a health assessment within the last 12 months**

## What we have done

- We have improved our timeliness for initial health assessments over the last 12 months from less than 30% to more than 70%
- The Named Nurse for Looked After Children reviews all health assessments to ensure that the quality of assessments is good and that the health plan has 'smart' objectives

### **What we are going to do next**

- We will support social workers and foster carers to understand and complete the Strengths and Difficulties questionnaires on an annual basis
- We will work across Children's Services to make best use of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire to support the emotional well-being and mental health needs of children and young people.
- We will work with partners to influence the development of clear pathways for children, young people and care leavers who need emotional support and access to CAMHS
- We will enhance our monitoring of health trends to inform on-going healthcare provision
- We will introduce a real time audit tool to gain the opinion of children and young people in Walsall to help us to continue to improve our services
- We will work together to improve the availability of health assessments for care leavers to ensure that they have access to information regarding their individual health histories
- Training for Transition and Leaving Care (TLC) workers will be provided to enable them to distribute condoms

### **How we will know we have succeeded**

- The % of initial health assessments completed on time will increase
- The % of looked after children with full immunisations will reflect and exceed that of the wider community
- More children and young people will have completed Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires that help to understand their emotional well-being and mental health needs and that inform care provision
- More care leavers will have engaged in health assessments and will know their health history
- Transition and Leaving Care workers will be trained to be able to distribute condoms.

**I don't like it when they ask me things and then ask my foster carer.**

**Advice from the nurse at drop in when I'm feeling unwell would be better than a health assessment when I'm feeling ok.**

**We haven't seen the nurse at the drop in for 18months ~ no one asked us if she should stop coming.**

**You should do a survey and see what children think about the health questions.**

## **Leisure**

Children, young people and care leavers are supported and encouraged to enjoy a wide range of leisure, cultural, sport and social activity which will enable them to fulfil their potential and make new friends.

## **Our pledge to children, young people and care leavers says:**

- We will make sure your passport application is treated as a priority for children in long term placements
- We will make sure you have your leisure card

## **What we know about looked after children's experience nationally**

- **almost a third of children and young people reporting being personally affected by reductions in local council budgets said this was through a reduction in the available activities for them to do**

(Children's Care Monitor 2013/14)

## **What we know locally**

- **25% of our looked after children have a passport**
- **In Dec 2012 we issued a leisure cards to every looked after child, as well as offering reduced rates for carers, and their siblings to attend with the looked after children, through an opportunity to sign up to the Move It Scheme.**
- **In 2013 67 looked after children had used their leisure card, attending a total of 423 times**

## **What we have done**

- We continue to celebrate the achievements of our looked after children and care leavers through our Excellent Night out and the Excellence Tea Party
- We have developed a leisure pass which is available to all out looked after children who are cared for in Walsall
- We have supported providers to sign up to the Children's University and encouraged carers to support children in accessing the full range of leisure activities
- We have embedded carer responsibilities to make decisions about overnight stays with friends

## **What we are going to do next**

- Increase the number of children and young people who have a passport
- Extend the leisure pass to care leavers

### **How we will know we have succeeded**

- 70% plus of our looked after children will have a passport
- 20% of looked after children will have accessed leisure centre activities

**Carers go on more holidays and children and young people are put in respite, this is unfair.**

**No passport means I can't get a job or go on holiday aboard with my carers.**

**Check up on passports and report it, report it, report it!!**

**I've been waiting months for my passport. It's my proof of identity.**

**A leisure passport for Care Leavers is great!**

### **Moving to Adulthood**

Children and young people are supported as they move towards adulthood and enter it feeling confident about their future. They will have a home to live in, life skills to look after themselves and be supported to continue in education whether that is through an apprenticeship or higher education so that they can earn a living to support themselves.

### **Our pledge to children, young people and care leavers says:**

- We will encourage you to reach for the stars and believe in you to be the best you can possibly be
- We will encourage you to do things by yourself, but hold your hand when you need it
- We will provide you with clear information about what your Entitlements are as a care leaver

### **What we know about looked after children's experience nationally**

- **88% said they were receiving help to prepare for an independent life**
- **39% of care leavers live alone in their own flat**
- **15% of care leavers live in supported lodgings**
- **11% of care leavers live with their parents**

(Children's Care Monitor 2013/14)

### **What we know locally**

- **55% of young people were in education, employment or training at age 19 (March 2014). The national average for England was 56% in 2013.**
- **Health assessments for care leavers are often missing**
- **Choice of accommodation options for care leavers in Walsall is limited. Some of the provision feels unsafe to our care leavers and information about what the choices are is seen as difficult to get**
- **Young people and workers find the existing Pathway Plan cumbersome and confusing**

(Catch 22 National Care Advisory Service – Walsall Council Leaving Care Diagnostic March 2014)

### **What we have done**

- We have completed a review of our Transition and Care Leaving Team facilitated by an external organisation, Catch 22, which has helped us in identifying our next steps.
- We have developed a Staying Put policy which enables young people to remain with their foster carer post 18

- Provided training for all Personal Advisors to be sure that they understand what care leavers are entitled to
- The pathway plan has been revised with input from young people
- Care leavers now participate in Council 4 Kids in a structured way through the New Belongings group
- Our care leavers have developed a set of local pledges that translate the Care Leavers Charter into local promises
- With our care leavers we have developed a young person's guide to Care Leaver Entitlements
- Developed a range of work experience opportunities across the Council

### **What we are going to do next**

- Review our Transition and Leaving Care Service to ensure that transition from being looked after to being a care leaver is clear and properly planned for
- Work with commissioners, providers and young people to improve the range and choice of safe and supportive housing options for our care leavers who wish to live independently
- Work with our Commissioners and Housing providers to improve perceptions of safety, choice and availability of information
- Review our Staying Put policy and publicise the outcome
- The pathway plan will be revised with input from young people
- We will work with the Council 4 Kids and New Belongings to ensure that care leavers are able to participate in a structured way in providing feedback to the Corporate Parenting Board
- Continue to work with partners across the partnership to increase the range of work experience opportunities for care leavers
- We will continue to implement the actions in our Care2Work plan and gain the Catch22 Quality mark

### **How we will know we have succeeded**

- More care leavers will have suitable accommodation at age 19, 20 and 21
- More care leavers will be engaged in education, employment or training at age 19, 20 and 21

**The accommodation is rubbish!**

**When I left my accommodation my stuff got thrown away. You need to find a place to store it.**

**Talking to care leavers about if they are ready to move if not what can be done to help them.**

### **Corporate Parenting**

Walsall Council and its partners recognise their responsibilities towards children and young people who are looked after and care leavers. They act as good parents would in any family and ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities in listening to looked after children and young people and care leavers and in supporting access to education, leisure and cultural activities, a healthy lifestyle, housing, work experience and employment opportunities.

### **Our pledge to children, young people and care leavers:**

- We will support Walsall Council 4 Kids and New Belongings to make sure that looked after children in Walsall have their voices heard
- We will meet regularly with Council 4Kids and the New Belongings to discuss our progress in delivering on our promises

### **What we know about looked after children's experience nationally**

- **53% of children surveyed said they didn't know about a Children in Care Council in their area**

(Children's Care Monitor 2013/14)

### **What we know locally**

- **Corporate Parenting Board has met with C4K 3 times in the last 12 months**
- **It is a challenge to engage children and young people in becoming active members of C4K and New Belongings**

### **What we have done**

- Members of Scrutiny have looked at the journey of looked after children to develop their understanding
- Participated in New Belongings and used this pilot as a way of expanding partnership delivery to care leavers
- Developed a 'New Belongings' group for care leavers as part of C4K

### **What we are going to do next**

- Develop an active federation of interested parties across the partnership to ensure our Strategic plans about our next steps are taken forward
- Revise our induction process for elected members to support them in fully understanding their responsibilities as Corporate Parents
- Strengthen and improve elected member involvement in our Children's Homes
- Work with our looked after children and care leavers to seek other ways of growing C4K and related groups

## How we will know we have succeeded

- Our C4K and New Belongings Group will grow and be really active in engagement with all looked after children, care leavers and the Corporate Parenting Board
- All members of the Corporate Parenting Board will have completed Total Respect Training
- Our federation will be in place and taking forward plans
- All elected members will be active Corporate Parents with knowledge about the life and experiences of looked after children and care leavers

**I've been asking  
about some of this  
stuff for years.**

**You need to  
listen to us.**

**You need to  
do the things  
you say you  
are going to  
do.**

## **Delivering, monitoring and reviewing our action plan**

Our promises to children and young people who are looked after and our care leavers are important and we will do our very best to make sure that we keep these promises.

We want children and young people who are or have been looked after to tell us when they feel we are not keeping any of the promises made in our pledge.

We want them to tell us if they feel their rights are not being respected.

Each promise will have an action plan which describes the actions needed to deliver the things we have agreed to do next. Progress against these action plans will be monitored and reviewed at the Corporate Parenting Board who will agree a schedule for this on an annual basis. Progress will be shared with C4K and New Belongings

If we think we will be unable to deliver a promise because of things that are outside our control we will ensure that C4K and New Belongings are told this with the reasons why.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy will be refreshed in September 2015 and the overall strategy will be reviewed in 2017.