

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

1 July, 2019 at 6.00pm at the Council House, Walsall

Committee Members Present

Councillor Wilson (Chair)
Councillor Jukes (Vice Chair)
Councillor Ferguson
Councillor Jeavons
Councillor M. Nazir
Councillor M. Statham
Councillor Neville

Officers Present

Steve Liddicott	Interim Assistant Director – Social Care and Safeguarding
Jivan Sembi	Group Manager – Corporate Parenting
Michelle Cummings	Children and Young Persons Champion (Participation and Engagement)
Alison Jones	Designated Nurse Children Looked After - CCG
Elizabeth Gosling	Interim Group Manager Provider Services

Representing Young People

Hannah Armstrong
Reece

64/19 Apologies

None.

65/19 Minutes

A copy of the minutes of the meetings held on 15th April, 2019, were submitted:-

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th April, 2019, a copy having previously been circulated to each Member of the Board, be approved and signed by the chairman as a correct record.

66/19 **Substitution**

There were no substitutions.

67/19 **Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

There were no declarations of interest or party whips.

68/19 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**

There were no items to consider in private session.

69/19 **Young People Engagement**

The Board considered the report of the Children's Champion (Participation and Engagement).

(Annexed)

The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) advised that young people had been involved in the consultation to set up the adolescent support service. Having participated in the recruitment process, young people would also form part of an advisory panel to look at the operational model. She further explained that young people were a critical and valued part of the process.

The Children's Champion (Participation and Engagement) advised that Total Respect Training was going well with 10 staff having received training. A further 'train the trainer' session would be undertaken in August 2019, which would increase the pool of trainers. Members requested that Total Respect Training be established for the Board. Hannah advised that Total Respect training should include raising awareness of equalities issues.

In relation to local businesses, the Board were advised that the care leavers covenant was a commitment from public, private and voluntary sector organisations to support people leaving care. Barclays had developed new resources for care experienced young people in supporting them to manage their finances.

The Chair noted the development of a football team to promote positive social interaction with Corporate Parents and sought an update. Officers explained that social workers were assisting young people to develop the programme and that coaching would take place.

The Chair welcomed the update on the Children in Care Council (CiCC) but asked how those in care are made aware of the CiCC and how to become involved. Officers advised that visits were undertaken to residential homes and that social workers also raised awareness. In addition, officers attended meetings of the foster care association.

The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) confirmed that the website for the CiCC was being updated and that care leavers were working with the communications team to make the site more accessible for young people. The service were also engaging Catch22 to improve the use of social media.

The Chair asked what specific issues had been raised by young people. The Children's Champion (Participation and Engagement) explained that it related to family time but the matter had now been resolved.

The Chair commented that some members of the Board had attended the CiCC earlier in the year and asked when the Board could next attend. The Senior Democratic Services Officer agreed to liaise with colleagues in children's services to identify a suitable CiCC meeting for members of the board to attend.

The Chair requested an update in relation to mental health. The Group Manager – Corporate Parenting advised that a review of the FLASH service had been undertaken and confirmed that a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Board. The Designated Nurse Children Looked After advised that she had reviewed mental health services across the Black Country. Walsall was the only authority to have a FLASH service. The chair advised that he was pleased that Walsall was leading the way.

In relation to the use of social media, Hannah advised that whilst the website was being improved there were issues with some social media privacy for young people in care/care leavers. There was an app available which was more secure and be a better way of communicating updates in relation to issues such as mental health and the work of Council 4 Kids. The Group Manager – Corporate Parenting advised that this formed part of the conversation with Catch22.

Resolved

That:-

1. the Senior Democratic Services Officer liaise with the Children's and Young Persons Champion to identify a date for members to attend the Children in Care Council; and
2. the FLASH service be included as an item on the agenda for the September meeting of the Board.
3. Total Respect training for members of the Board be arranged.

70/19 Lifelong Links and Family Group Conferences

The Board considered the report of the Prevention Lead (Transformation)

(See annexed)

The Board noted that plans were being developed to introduce a robust Family Group Conference offer from Walsall Council to its children, families and communities. Officers confirmed that the project would be funded via transformation.

It was explained that Family Group Conferences empowered a family and their network to draw on their strengths and resources to make a safe plan for their children. In response to a question from the Board, officers confirmed that the nearest authority operating this model was Dudley. The Chair requested that contact be made with Dudley to ascertain how the service was performing. The Chair asked about the potential cost of the service if it were to be rolled-out. Officers advised that the report to the Board was to highlight the service and develop a broad understanding of the concept. The cost of the service would be subject to the level at which it is rolled out.

The Chair welcomed the initiative and stated that working with families is the best approach.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

71/19 Fostering

The Board considered the report of the Interim Group Manager (Provider Services).

(Annexed)

The Board were advised that a recent mock inspection of the Service highlighted that a number of improvements needed to be made to ensure the service continues to operate within regulations and meets its objectives to provide high quality care close to home for Walsall's looked after children.

The Board noted that a number of developments to improve the service were underway including:-

- An independently chaired recruitment and retention strategy group;
- Developing ways to recruit, train and support foster carers;
- Recognising the role and contribution of foster carers;
- Establishing a fourth mockingbird hub.

The Board further noted that around 70% of looked after children were in fostering arrangements.

The Interim Assistant Director (Social Care and Safeguarding) advised that an action plan was in place. This included a reorganisation and implementation of a new structure to include a specialist team responsible for assessment of and supervision/support of Kinship Carers. Additional performance data would also be monitored such as the timeliness of foster carer / household reviews; supervision visits (including household inspections); unannounced supervisory visits; DBS; Medicals updates; health safety updates; safe care plan updates.

Members of the board considered the action plan and sought assurance that areas marked as red would be addressed. The Group Manager provided assurance and

explained that work was already in progress with scheduled dates for completion of each action.

The Chair welcomed the fact that progress was being made but challenged why basic processes had not been carried out. The Interim Assistant Director (Social Care and Safeguarding) advised that some processes had been overcomplicated such as the administrative processes to review regulatory checks. These had been reviewed and streamlined and electronic DBS checks would be introduced.

The Board discussed the aim to reduce caseloads to 18 per social worker and asked how achievable this would be and whether this was a manageable caseload to carry. The Group Manager (Corporate Parenting) advised that the National Fostering Network recommend a caseload of between 15 and 18 households.

In response to a question regarding recruitment of foster carers, the Interim Group Manager (Provider Services) confirmed that a recruitment and retention strategy group had been established to review and agree recruitment / commission targets and types of fostering provision. Members were advised that recruitment regionally was challenging and so the move to Mockingbird model provided Walsall with a unique selling point.

A member queried arrangements for individuals placed out of borough. Officers confirmed that Walsall were still responsible for ensuring those out of borough received the appropriate level of support. The Board were advised that many out of borough placements were within a 20 mile radius of Walsall. The Designated Nurse Children Looked After advised that young people out of borough would visit a health professional in that area but assured members that she quality assured the checks.

The Board considered the Mockingbird project noting that the Foster Care Association had become more accustomed to the concept. Officers advised that one of the 3rd hub carers was a member of the Foster Care Association.

Resolved

1. That the outcome of the mock inspection be noted; and
2. That the progress made to implement the Mocking bird be noted.

72/19 Work Programme

Members considered the work programme.

Resolved

That the work programme be noted.

73/19 Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting to be held on 2nd September, 2019.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 7.25 p.m.

Signed:

Date: