

Corporate Parenting Board

Monday 21 February 2022 at 6.00 p.m.

Conference Room 2, Walsall Council House

Board Members Present:

Councillor T. Wilson (Chair)
Councillor Worrall (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Hicken
Councillor K. Murphy

Officers Present

Elise Hopkins	Director, Customer Engagement
David Hughes	Children and Young Persons Champion
Helena Kucharczyk	Head of Performance Improvement and Quality
Colleen Male	Director, Children's Social Work
Jivan Sembi	Head of Service (Children in Care, Provider and Care Leaving Services)

Young person representing the Children in Care Council.

Welcome

At this point in the meeting, the Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone present. He also noted that the meeting to the papers, which could be found on the Council's Committee Management Information system (CMIS) webpage. It was noted that a Shadow Board was held directly prior to the meeting to seek the views and experiences of young people.

32/21 Introductions and Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Alison Jones and Lorraine Thompson (Advisors to the Board).

33/21 Substitutions

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

34/21 Minutes

A copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2022, were submitted.

(see annexed)

Resolved (Unanimous)

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2022, copies having previously been circulated to each Member of the Board, be approved and signed by the chairman as a correct record.

35/21 Young People Engagement

The Children and Young Persons Champion presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The Board were provided with some of the highlights of Children in Care Council (CICC) since the last Board, and provided an update on the activities of the CICC, including:

- Young People involvement in the interview for the Director of Early Help and Walsall Right 4 Children Partnership.
- Willenhall Litter pick.
- The new virtual care leavers group.
- A video had been produced by young people for social worker induction.
- Young people had been involved in the development of the website.
- RESPECT training (it was noted that venues were now provided free of charge as a result of the Board's recommendation).

Members were provided with an update on the offer from South Staffs water as part of the care leaver's covenant. The Chair suggested that a letter be written on behalf of the Board to thank South Staffs water for the provision of this support. A discussion ensued on the increasing cost of living, and it was suggested that energy companies were contacted to request that they consider providing support for care leavers. The Director for Customer Engagement stated that the customer engagement team progress this request through the Walsall 'switch and save' scheme..

Members were informed of work with a care leaver, who had no family and few friends in England, to ensure that he felt connected to care leavers and young adults within Walsall.

The Board discussed the potential to provide references for young people and Officers confirmed that these were provided through the virtual school.

The Young Person in attendance described the Care Leavers Group, and provided his perspective on language that cares.

The Board were updated on the number of young people attending the Children in Care Council. Members suggested that assistance with transport for young people to this group was considered by Officers to ensure that young people were not precluded from attending should they wish.

Resolved:

1. That the Young People Engagement Report is noted.
2. The Chair, on behalf of the Board, writes to South Staffs Water to thank them for the support provided to Care Leavers.
3. Officers are requested to consider options for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) cohort, to identify support that could be provided in the future.

36/21 Walsall Children's Services Corporate Parenting Board Quarter 3

The Head of Performance Improvement and Quality presented the performance monitoring report and highlighted the salient points (annexed).

A Member asked for an explanation of the 'strength and difficulties questionnaire', the Head of Performance, Improvement and Quality stated that this was a national questionnaire designed to assess the emotional resilience of young people – as a result the Local Authority was provided with an average score.

In response to a question raised by a young person, it was clarified that the 'length of time placed at home on full care orders' referred to timescales and not age groups.

A Member expressed concern that 633 visits had not been undertaken to timescale. Officers confirmed that visits were often out of timescale by a small number of days and stressed that the current climate posed a challenge. Further concern was expressed that 24% of PEPs were not meeting the required standard. It was agreed that further information would be sought from the Head of the Virtual School. The Chair welcomed the increased performance on dental checks and informed Members that NHS England had responded to the Boards letter (expressed concern at reduced access to dental services for Looked after Children) and that a response received stated that a report would be taken to the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved

1. That the Walsall Children's Services Corporate Parenting Board Quarter 3 presentation be noted.

2. That the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to provide the details of the dental briefing when it is taken to Committee.

7/21 Update Report – Children in Care Leavers Website and App

The Head of Performance Improvement and Quality presented the update report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The website was presented to Members, although it was noted that it was not yet complete. Members were informed that work was ongoing to explore the implementation of an App for care leavers and young people. Examples of two providers were provided within the report, and further discussions were being held to understand the functionality that the apps provide and how this could be applied in Walsall.

Members stressed the importance of involving young people in the design of the website, and in ensuring that it was appealing to this group. It was suggested that separate sections should be provided for carers and young people.

The Young Person in attendance stated that an app would be beneficial as not all young people have access to a computer, and suggested an app that did not use mobile data would be preferable. The costs of an app development were discussed.

Resolved

That the update report – Children in Care Leavers Website and App be noted and a further update be provided at a future meeting.

38/21 Update on Actions and Recommendations of Housing Report

The Head of Service presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The report detailed progress of recommendations and actions arising from the report presented to the Board in January 2021.

In response to the report a Member questioned when the training flat would be open and functional, and asked if Board Members could visit. Officers explained that the contract and specification had been agreed with locations being explored. Once this had been determined an update would be provided to the Board.

Members discussed the progress on the recommendations and considered the cost implications of increasing the setting up home grant from £2,500 to £3,000. A Member suggested that smaller housing associations were approached and asked to provide accommodation to young people at risk of becoming homeless. The Director of Customer Engagement provided further information on the tendering arrangements for this and stated that this would be further investigated.

Members considered information provided on the focused audit in respect of care experienced young parents and parents to be, and questioned how outcomes were measured.

In consideration of the increasing cost of living the Board discussed the range of support available to care leavers and it was acknowledged that the £2,500 grant to set up a home may not cover all costs. The Director of Customer Engagement

provided detail on the Crisis support scheme which was available to all Walsall residents.

Resolved

That the Update on Actions and Recommendations of the Housing Report was noted.

39/21 **Work Programme**

The Board considered the work programme for the 2021/22 municipal year.

Resolved

That the work programme was noted.

The date of the next meeting was 4 April 2022.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 7.45 p.m.

Signed

Date

