



Walsall Council

Corporate Parenting Board

Meeting to be held on: **Monday 4 April, 2022 AT 5.00 PM**

Meeting to be held: Conference Room 2, Council House, Walsall.

MEMBERSHIP:

Chair: Councillor Wilson
Vice Chair: Councillor Worrall
Councillor Ferguson
Councillor Hicken
Councillor Murphy
Councillor M Nazir
Councillor Mazhar

ADVISOR

Alison Jones (NHS Walsall CCG)

Note: Walsall Council encourages the public to exercise their right to attend meetings of Council, Cabinet and Committees. Agendas and reports are available for inspection from the Council's Democratic Services Team at the Council House, Walsall (Telephone 01922 654369) or on our website www.walsall.gov.uk.

ITEMS FOR BUSINESS

1.	Introductions and Apologies	
2.	Substitutions	
3.	Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2022.	<u>Enclosed</u>
4.	Young People Engagement	<u>To Follow</u>
5.	Increasing Employability for care experienced young people and those Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET).	<u>Enclosed</u>
6.	Apprenticeship Update	<u>To Follow</u>
7.	Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) Annual Report	<u>Enclosed</u>
8.	Work Programme	<u>Enclosed</u>
9.	Date of Next Meeting To be confirmed at Annual Council.	

The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 Specified pecuniary interests

The pecuniary interests which are specified for the purposes of Chapter 7 of Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011 are the interests specified in the second column of the following:

Subject	Prescribed description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.

Sponsorship	<p>Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by a member in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of a member.</p> <p>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Regulations (Consolidation) Act 1992.</p>
Contracts	<p>Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority:</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p>
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	<p>Any tenancy where (to a member's knowledge):</p> <p>(a) the landlord is the relevant authority;</p> <p>(b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.</p>
Securities	<p>Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where:</p> <p>(a) that body (to a member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and</p> <p>(b) either:</p> <p>(i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</p> <p>(ii) if the share capital of that body is more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</p>

Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)

Access to information: Exempt information

Part 1

Descriptions of exempt information: England

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the authority proposes:
 - (a) to give any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.
8. Information being disclosed during a meeting of a Scrutiny and Performance Panel when considering flood risk management functions which:
 - (a) Constitutes a trades secret;
 - (b) Its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the risk management authority);
 - (c) It was obtained by a risk management authority from any other person and its disclosure to the public by the risk management authority would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that other person.

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

Young People's Engagement

Executive Summary:

The Council4Kids, the "Children in Care Council" (CICC), is the forum where Walsall's looked after children, young people and care leavers are able to shape and influence the parenting and support that they receive.

This report describes some of the highlights of the CICC since the last Corporate Parenting Board on 8th September 2021.

Reason for bringing to the Corporate Parenting Board:

To provide the Corporate Parenting Board an update on the activities of the CICC which will allow the Board to offer any support to the children, in partnership with strategic management as corporate parents for looked after children.

We are keen to ensure that the CICC is encouraged to share highlights and raise any issues and concerns they may have on behalf of care experienced young people in Walsall with a view to improving services and outcome for children in the care of Walsall Council.

The Shadow Board has been put in place to ensure that the young people are fully involved in the Corporate Parenting Board and that their views are considered as part of this process

Recommendations:

The Board notes the activity and events of the Children in Care Council.

Background papers:

Previous Young People Engagement reports.

Corporate Parenting Pledges

The Walsall Promise for all Children in Care and Care Leavers

Resource and legal considerations:

Walsall is committed to ensuring that children and young people are involved in decision making and processes that directly affect their lives through.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced seven Corporate Parenting Principles and 2 of the principles focus on the involvement and participation of children and young people:

- Encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- Take account of a child or young person's views, wishes and feelings

Article 12 United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child says that children and young people have the human right to have opinions and for these opinions to be heard and taken seriously and taken seriously.

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 works with children in care and our care experienced young people to ensure that our CICC is a rich and engaging forum. Regular reports are provided to the Director of Children's Services and the Corporate Parenting Board.

Reducing inequalities:


The children in care council seeks to secure improvements in the equality of services, which, when achieved will have a positive impact on our most vulnerable children, young people and their families.

Consultation:

The CICC 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.

Contact Officer:

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Report: Young People's Engagement and Children in Care Council

1.0 Introduction

This report address the key actions and highlights since the last meeting of the last Corporate Parenting Board in January 2022.

1.1 Developing the look and feel of our Website

During the development of the children's section of the council website the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and the Care Leavers group were encouraged to have their say.

They were consulted on what content should go on there and how this should look. There were some limitations to what was possible but some things which our groups suggested were:

- Having a 'Blog page' where stories and information can be updated regularly
- Pictures to be added not just writing
- Information on the CiCC and Care Leavers group to be present

The Childrens Champion and Care Leaver Ambassador have shared these views and so far our young people are pleased with the information which is now live for them to access.

We have also gathered the views of some Foster Carers who like the information that is on the website. They feel the children's section is easily accessible.

1.2 Care leavers App

Following the discussion held at the last Board meeting we have undertaken in further consultation with our care leavers. Our care leavers have met with one of the providers for an App. Following this session we have collated some of their feedback both in person as well as through our virtual platform using Mentimeter.

There has very little interest from our care leavers wanting us to provide them with an App. They feel that they do like being able to look for themselves and read things in their own time but ultimately they all prefer to ask their Personal Advisor for support and signposting when required. Having Apps on your phone is a good way to socialise and keep in touch with friends e.g. Whatsapp or Snapchat and these apps are far more advanced and interactive than any care leaver app we have seen to date.

"We do like to be informed and like to access information but having this on an app would make us feel more excluded as opposed to included which is what we have experienced for many years. "

"We would all appreciate the website being updated regularly" and can go on there if we need information that our PA's cannot provide. "

At this point the feedback from our care leavers is asking us to focus on ensuring that our website is would be a key source of information and the support of their Personal Advisors

1.3 **Involving our Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers**

We are starting to contact our children and young people who are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children to seek their views about how they wish to be involved in the activities of the Children in Care Council and Care Leaver's Forum. There are currently 13 young people aged 16 and 17 years and over 30 young people aged between 18 and 23 years. Many of our young people live in Walsall and in neighbouring Local Authorities and are from a range of backgrounds.

In order to ensure that we are capturing their views we will need to work with their Personal Advisors and interpreters to engage their views meaningfully and consider the best way to involve them in the range of participation activities and forums.

1.4 **Total Respect Training**

Total Respect training is run by children in care and care leavers (in partnership with staff). This training provides a valuable insight into the lives of children in care and care leavers.

Total Respect training was relaunched this year and our first course was delivered on 11th March 2022 by David Hughes, Sophia Begum, Billy and Dean who are two of our care leavers. We had 15 people booked on the course of which 7 attended. Although we expected more to attend the training, in some ways this was good as it helped settle Billy and Dean's nerves. Billy and Dean did such a wonderful job, were super confident and delivered the session in a really professional way. Here are some comments we have received:

-Fab training, really thought provoking.

-I have taken lots away from the training, it's great that you get young people involved to share things from their perspective.

-I really enjoyed the interactive tasks involved, this will stick with me for a long time.

1.5 **Promotion through Foster Carers Newsletter**

Lashone Richards is a Mockingbird Hub Foster Carer. She volunteers her time to help support the CiCC and Care Leavers Group and attends all of our sessions. She brings young people with her and always gives them a lift home too and we are always grateful of her support. Through our joint working with Lashone she has helped us promote our success stories and the work we do within our groups.

In February 2022 we had our first appearance in the Foster Carers Newsletter through 'Walsall Fostering Service Newsletter'. We are very grateful and see this as a fantastic opportunity to promote the group and we hope to get some new recruits as part of this.

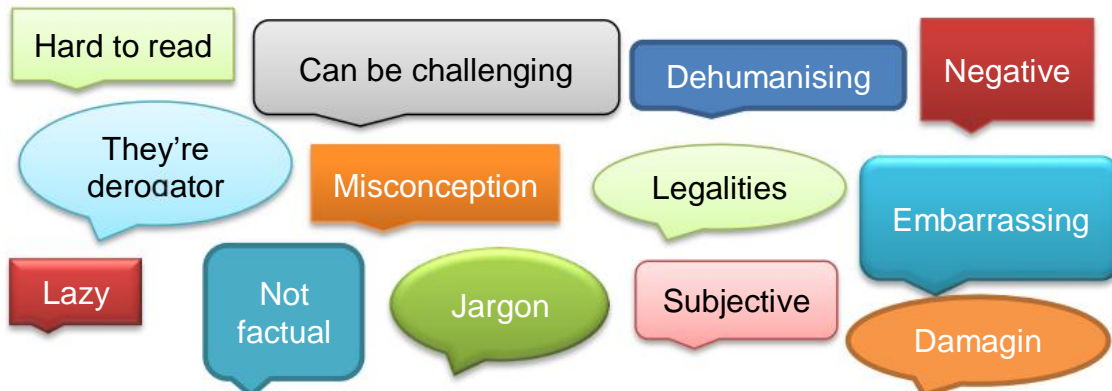
1.6 Caring language

We have started to review the language we use to describe our interactions with our children and young people. We have undertaken both face to face consultation as well as sought views of children, young people and their carers via Mentimeter which is a virtual tool to collate anonymous views.

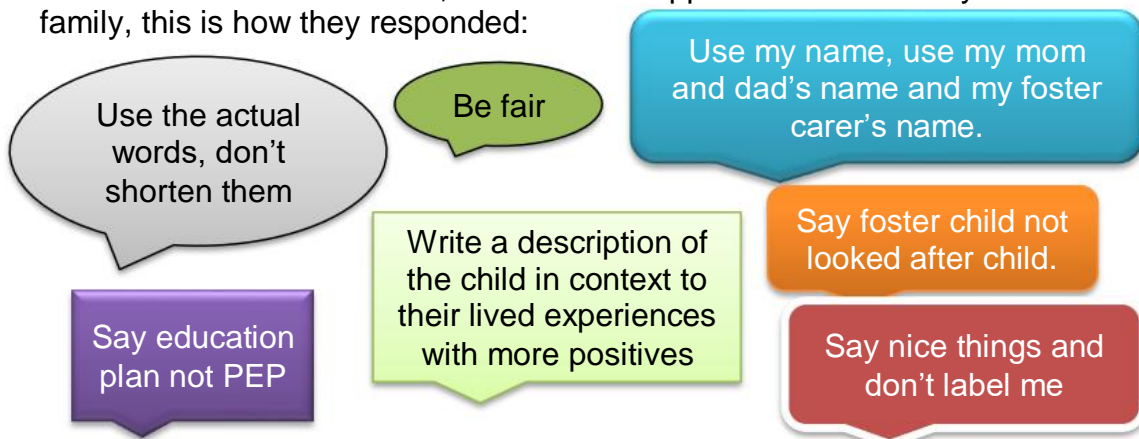
In the first phase of our consultation we have considered the words that our children and young people have said that they don't like.

<i>Case load</i>	<i>Service users</i>	<i>Intervention</i>
<i>Support plan</i>	<i>Support package</i>	<i>Safeguarding</i>
<i>Child offloading their concerns</i>	<i>Case</i>	<i>Access to their files</i>
<i>Placement</i>	<i>LAC</i>	<i>LAC Review</i>
<i>Transitions – Entering Adulthood</i>	<i>Respite</i>	<i>Challenging behaviour</i>
<i>PEP</i>	<i>Difficult to place</i>	<i>Hard to/ will not engage</i>
<i>Pupil Premium</i>	<i>Foster Carer</i>	<i>SGO</i>
<i>Contact</i>	<i>Contact centre</i>	<i>Referral</i>
<i>Efficiency savings</i>	<i>IRO</i>	<i>Putting themselves at risk</i>
<i>Case file</i>	<i>CAMHS</i>	<i>PEP</i>

The feedback received via the Mentimeter set out below is what they think of them and how they make them feel:



Then we asked what our young people would prefer for professionals to say instead of the words above, some were supported to do this by their foster family, this is how they responded:



Conclusion and recommendations:

This project has been a big piece of work and the intended purpose is to give children a voice. As we know nationally that children in care are faced with many processes, meetings and professionals, so having their say on the words which we say and record on their records is an important and empowering thing to be part of.

What we would like to see happen next is that these views and suggestions are taken on board by all professionals no matter which department they work in are saying and recording caring language that is easy for everyone to understand and access.

We now aim to work in partnership with *Practice and Partnership Development* where we will set up a steering group of young people and professionals to help drive forward some positive changes. One of the first things we aim to do in Walsall is to change some key words so we have made a start by selecting 10 of the most recurrent words highlighted during our consultation.

These words are:

1. LAC
2. Case Load
3. Placement
4. Respite
5. Contact
6. Referral
7. Putting themselves at risk
8. Service users
9. PEP
10. Challenging behaviour

With the support from all staff and managers we believe that we can make a big difference to all children involved with professional services. It's not just about banning words but changing the culture within the professional arena.

We seek to focus on these 10 words across the Council which we communicate across the whole service and partners and that we all give a commitment to stop using. We will then 'call people in' if the use one of the 10 words to challenge in a strength based and restorative way. .

1.7 Free Leisure pass

The Children's Champion received an email from a care leaver in March asking for some support to be able to access her local gym, fitness and swimming facilities. As part of our Local Offer to Care Leavers they all get a free subscription for our Active Living Centres within Walsall and run by the Council. This young lady however lives out of borough and therefore was not able to access a gym in Walsall. David managed to secure provision for this particular young person through our regional participation group.

One thing we would like the Board to consider is a regional agreement across all 14 Local Authorities for access to leisure via the West Midlands Combined Authority.

1.8 **Good news stories**

Big shout out to one of our committed care leavers Jordan. In March Jordan was successful in gaining employment and is enjoying his new chapter in adult life. Despite this he is still committed to the group and the work we do so will remain involved in our meetings and projects. We are all really proud of Jordan and grateful for the support and commitment he has given to both the Children In Care Council and the Care leavers group. One thing Jordan has requested is a lanyard and maybe an ID badge. He loves getting involved and is happy to support our groups and has asked if we can provide him with one. I told Jordan I will bring this to the board.

1.9 **Independent Living Skills**

On the 3rd February 2022 our Care Leavers group welcomed two managers from Transition and Leaving Care service. They talked about providing some workshops for care leavers to cover a range of topics such as; managing money, how to set up your bills and manage them, cooking skills, using household appliances, education employment and training and things related to this. Our care leavers provided the following feedback:

“I think it’s a good idea.”

“Moving out and living on your own may be scary so this is a great idea.”

“If this group was set up I think I would attend.”

“This would be good so I could meet some other care leavers and make some new friends.”

“I didn’t realise there was so much to pay for when you move out. I think this group would help.”

“I’m not sure if I would attend, but I think it’s really good idea and other care leavers might want to attend.”

“If this group would have been around when I left care then I think it would have really helped me.”

“I like coming to the TLC hub so having these meetings would be good as it means I could come here more often.”

“I like the idea of getting to know more staff so I wouldn’t have to just rely on my PA.”

“It sounds good but I’m not sure if I would come along.”

“Transport could be an issue for some care leavers.”

1.10 **Virtual Care Leavers Group**

We launched our additional care leavers group on the 7th of March but on this occasion nobody joined in the Teams call. We will continue to promote this virtual group through our Transition Leaving Care service and ask the Personal Advisors to pass on the details and encourage attendance.

1.11 **Other news**

- Our care leavers have supported different departments with two interview panels in March.
- Thank you to the Virtual School for sending a representative to speak to the CiCC in person on the 10th March 2022

1.12 **Dates for the diary**

Council 4 Kids group dates:

This group continues to be held once every other week. The members of our group welcome guest speaker and are happy for managers or elected members to pop along and say hello if they wish.

Care Leavers Group:

Our care leavers group continues to meet twice per month. We run one face to face session per month and one virtual session. Our care leavers are happy to see guest speakers at their meetings and would be happy for any managers or elected members to pop into their meetings if they wish.

David Hughes
Children's Champion

Title of the Report: Increasing Employability for care experienced young people and those **Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET)**.

Executive Summary

We have a duty to ensure our young people are engaged in education, employment or training. This report provides an update to the report presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in July 2021 in regards to care experience young people not in Education, Employment or Training.

It aims to give an update of the current data along with an overview of the current initiatives aimed to improve opportunities for care experienced young people.

Reason for bringing to the Corporate Parenting Board

1. To provide comparative data for young people not in employment, education, or training.
2. To provide an overview of the initiatives aimed to improve opportunities for care experienced young people.

Recommendations

- The Board is asked to note the Corporate Parenting responsibilities of the Council with regard to ensuring Children in Care and care experienced young people have access to education and training opportunities that will assist them in their future.

Background papers:

Report to the Board in July 2021

Resource and legal considerations

Local authority duties to young people and care leavers are set out in legislation:

Children Act 1989

Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

Children and Social Work Act 2017

Education and Skills Act 2008 (sections 10, 12 and 68)

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 move on to live independently.

- 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.

Reducing inequalities

The Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-2025 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 Children in Care and Care Leavers, we collectively seek to redress the disadvantage that looked after children and care leavers face.

Contact Officers

Jivan Sembi
Head of Service
Jivan.sembi@walsall.gov.uk

Improving Employability and Training for care experienced young people

1.0 Introduction

1.1 It is recognised that many care leavers do not achieve the same outcomes as their peers highlighting the need to ensure that opportunities created are responsive to challenges faced and increase the chances for achieving sustainable positive outcomes into employment and training. Many of our care leavers have not been afforded the stability that allows them to gain the skills that would make them more employable within the job market. Care leavers are underrepresented in higher education.

1.2 We remain committed to raise aspirations, increase skills and improve opportunities into employment with a focus on mentoring, work experience/ shadowing and apprenticeships with the priority to focus on providing support:

- Those at key point of transition to successfully access their next steps into positive post 16 destinations
- Identify those at risk of dropping out and supporting the retention of those in Education, Employment and Training in their current destination.
- Exploring options and pathways for those not in education, employment and training.

1.3 So what are we doing to support young people to maintain work or learning?

- Social workers, the Virtual School and Personal Advisors actively engage, encourage and support young people in their chosen field of education, employment and training.
- Pathway Plans are more specific about work and learning and what we will do to address if there are challenges
- Personal Education Plans identifying possibility of not being in learning or work.
- Our Impact Advisors work with the young people who have been referred to support them in to the training or employment.
- The IMPACT advisors have established weekly a face to face drop-in service since January 2022 and this is already beginning to make a difference as our young people and personal advisors are utilising the service.
- Monthly Neet Action Group meetings which include Lorraine Thompson, Virtual School Head, Managers from the Transitions and Leaving Care Service and our named IMPACT worker from Black Country Impact as well as representation from Walsall Works.

1.4 Not in education, Employment and Training

The most recent (2021/21) national and regional data for care leavers aged **19 to 21** years in Employment, Education or Training

2020/21	England	52%
2020/21	West Midlands	50%
2020/21	Stat Neighbours	46.4%
2021/22 Quarter 3	Walsall	57.7%

The percentage of care leavers in education, employment or training at quarter three of 2020-21 was 57.7%. This has increased from 52.1% at the end of quarter 2.

At 25 March 2022 we currently have 260 care experienced young people between the ages of **17 and 21 years**.

66% (172 of 260) are in Employment, Education or Training.

35% (88 of 260) are Not in Employment, Education or Training.

- 9 are not available for work or learning because of illness or disability
- 11 are not available for work or learning due to pregnancy or parenting
- 68 are not available for work or learning due to other circumstances.

1.5 Breakdown for young people aged 17 to 21 years

Age	17	18	19	20	21	Total
Employment, Education or Training	70%	82%	57%	55%	55%	66%
Number of young people	34	63	28	30	17	172
Not Employment, Education or Training	30%	18%	43%	45%	45%	34%
No of young people	13	14	22	25	14	88
TOTAL	48	77	49	55	31	260

1.6 As you can see from the data above, the largest proportion of not in Employment, Education or Training are aged between 19 – 21 years. The focus is therefore on targeted support to focus on work readiness.

Our focus is on the 88 young people young people that should be actively receiving support to secure employment or training. However, other factors will impact on their readiness for work or able to receive the right level of support owing to a number of factors.

10 are in custody: as the restrictions have now eased most young people are able to access learning or work within custody settings.

11 are Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking and whilst they are able to access educational support through ESOL, some are not able to gain employment owing to their immigration status.

7 have significant offending history which limits their options for work and training opportunities.

A number of young people are struggling with independence and are receiving significant support in order to ensure some stability. This sometimes means that their ability to enter the job market or focus on education and training is severely compromised. Other support such as stabilising their mental health or resolving accommodation issues is a priority and once resolved, a greater focus on education and training can begin.

1.7 A more detailed breakdown of all our 17-21 year olds:

Age	17	18	19	20	21	Total	%
Full Time Education (not higher education)	24	33	9	10	1	77	
Full Time Higher Education		4	2	3	4	13	
Full Time in Training or Employment	3	15	8	8	10	44	
Part Time in Education (not higher education)	7	8	1	3	1	20	
Part Time in Higher Education			1	1		2	
Part Time in Training or Employment		3	7	5	1	16	
						172	66%
Not in Education Employment or Training – Illness or Disability		2		5	2	9	
Not in Education Employment or Training – Other Circumstances	12	12	17	17	10	68	
Not in Education Employment or Training – Pregnancy/Parenting	1		5	3	2	11	
						88	34%
Total	48	77	49	55	31	260	

2.0 Virtual School – their role in supporting 16/18 year olds into Education, Employment & Training (EET)

2.1 Lorraine Thompson is the Virtual school Lead and leads on strategic planning and developments, policy, new initiatives and service delivery. The role of the Virtual school in supporting 16/18 year olds into Education, Employment & Training (EET). The Virtual School provide support to young people up to the age of 18

2.2 Post 16 key worker role

Our post 16 key worker tracks and monitors 16-18 year olds to ensure they are in appropriate post 16 provision and are given the right support advice and guidance to make informed career choices. Our post 16 key worker:

- Attends Personal Education Plan meetings for young people aged 16 & 17
- Provides career advice to 16+ young people
- Works with our NEET young people to engage them in back into EET
- Attends SEN annual reviews for young people with an EHCP
- Works closely with schools, colleges and training providers to ensure our young people are receiving the right support
- Attends the monthly NAG meeting
- Provides resources/equipment to help young people moving into EET

2.3 **Post 16 Mentor**

Our post 16 Mentor works with young people who are at risk of under achievement to

- Remove barriers to participation
- Advocate on behalf of the young person with schools and college
- Attend interviews/meetings with young people

Our post 16 mentor is relaunching our Corporate Mentoring Scheme now that face to face meetings are taking place.

2.4 **Careers Advisor Role**

Our careers advisor left the service in February 2022 to take up a post as senior careers advisor at a local college. We are currently looking at how we can provide timely careers advice in the future but in the meantime our secondary key workers are liaising with careers advisers in schools and colleges to ensure our young people are accessing appropriate careers advice.

2.5 **Apprenticeships**

We continue to support care leavers onto our council apprenticeship scheme. We offer a pre-apprenticeship scheme jointly developed with Endless Possibilities which includes:

- A 12 week paid work experience to help the young person 'try before they buy' making sure it is the right scheme for them and to gain valuable employability skills.
- A mentor throughout the whole apprenticeship to support the young person and provide advice and guidance to the employer
- Funding for equipment, resources and transport to enable them to be fully equipped for the apprentice
- The virtual school have offered 3 young people an apprenticeship to date.

Endless Possibilities

We have access to Walsall's 'Endless Possibilities' Apprenticeship Programme. This targeted Programme for Care Leavers was specifically established to provide those Care Leavers who are interested in pursuing a career within the local authority, the experience and qualifications needed to secure permanent employment in order to achieve adult independence and economic wellbeing. The programme offers ring fenced apprenticeships.

There are currently **9** young people in apprenticeships across the Council and in external sectors. Each of the young people in an apprenticeship has a named mentor from the Virtual School.

Our apprentices are paid the national minimum rates of pay for age and not the apprentice rate per hour in order to support the young person's costs of living independently. The young person receives all the usual Walsall Council terms and conditions of employment including paid holidays, staff benefits including access to the Council's wider learning and development offer.

2.6 **Aspire to University**

We have over 40 young people signed up to our 'Aspire to University' (A2U) Project which is run by Wolverhampton University, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Staffordshire Virtual Schools to encourage more young people to move onto further and higher education.

The project includes providing Mentoring support for young people.

All universities and colleges must now consider care leavers in their access and participation plans in order to encourage and support them into higher education but we are far from getting this right. We have **18** young people attending University.

The Virtual School and the Transition and Leaving Care service work jointly to identify places, secure university accommodation, apply for funding and link in with the student leads. Many universities across the country have a dedicated support for care leavers and so we have now developed a good portfolio of those that are particularly supportive and can advise our young people accordingly.

The Corporate Mentoring Scheme is being relaunched which provides further capacity to support young people at University.

2.7 **Pupil Premium Funding**

The Pupil Premium funding we receive from the Department of Education to help support children in care between the ages of 5 and 16 years is extended to help support care leavers up to the age of 19. The funding has been used to provide equipment and resources to enable young people to move into Employment, Education or Training. For example, uniform and equipment, travel expenses, driving lessons, extra tuition and online training courses.

A recent pilot run by the Department of Education around pupil premium for post 16 has highlighted the need for additional funding for this group of young people. At the Virtual School Conference held on 16th March 2022 the Department of Education announced that funding for post 16 young people would be available and we would know more in the next few months

2.8 Alongside the work of the virtual school staff we also have other mechanisms in place to enable us to identify young people who may be at risk of not being Employment, Education and Training and need additional support at an early age. We have incorporated the Risk of Not in employment, education and training Indicator (RONI) into our personal education plans. This is a scoring system that enables us to identify young people who may be at risk of not being in Employment, Education and Training become so support and resources can be put in place before the young person leaves school in year 11.

We continue to provide support and guidance to our young people who are currently not in Employment, Education and Training by identifying appropriate provision and/or referring them onto other services such as Back Country IMPACT and Walsall Works.

2.9 **Black Country Impact**

In Walsall, we currently have two Impact workers that work in partnership with the Personal Advisers based in our Transitions and Leaving Care Service. All of our eligible young people are referred to this service and are routinely discussed as part of the monthly NAG meetings. Updates are provided as to the work that has been undertaken and whether the young people are engaging with the support on offer.

As a way of tracking the success, a log of contacts is kept by the Impact workers and shared with TLC Managers in order to ensure that all opportunities are explored and actions followed.

2.10 **Care Leavers Covenant**

The Care Leavers Covenant provides care leavers with opportunities to enter the world of work, such as offering work experience placements, work shadowing placements, internships, traineeships and apprenticeships.

2.11 **Transitions and Leaving Care Service :**

As part of our support to our young people, Personal Advisors work closely with partners in the Virtual School, DWP, Impact and education and training providers. Our links with local colleges are good and regular discussion with them in regards to education and training options for our young people takes place. This has often led to bespoke packages of support being offered to those that require it.

Laptops have been purchased through grant funding or distributed to care leavers from the allocation received from the Department for Education. Young people at risk of not being able to access further or higher education courses were prioritised initially.

In order to strengthen our tracking and monitoring of young people not in employment, education and training we have adapted our 8 weekly "Care Leaver Contact" record to capture the young person's current activity, which informs our performance dashboard. This ensures that managers are able to review the interventions required to support and prepare young people to engage in work or learning.

Pathway Plans are more specific about work and learning and what we will do to address if there are any challenges

Monthly NAG meetings are held at which young people not in work or learning are discussed at least on a bi-monthly basis. These discussions include information about aspirations and interests for individual young people, and the practical steps that need to be put in place to support the young person into employment, education or training and monitor that the actions agreed have been followed through.

2.12 **Peer Learning Programme - National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum - Catch22**

We are part of a peer learning which is facilitated by the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum, Catch22 and funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. This involves 4 County Councils and 6 Unitary Local Authorities. This programme aims to raise the profile of care leavers' employability following the Covid-19 pandemic.

The programme's objective is to support leaving care teams in Local Authorities to learn from other local areas and apply that learning to developing their own practice in working with local employers to provide employment opportunities for young people with care experience.

TLC staff, our Virtual School and Endless Possibilities have been involved in the peer learning events. The report of the programme will add to further learning for us to take forward.

3.0 **Examples of interventions to support young people in education & employment**

3.1 **Example of young person C:**

C is a bright young person who has experienced long term anxiety in regards to attending education. Her school attendance has been sporadic and historically of concern.

School Context: In September 2020 she was enrolled onto a sports course at a local college. C found it extremely challenging to access the curriculum in the classroom. College staff attempted to resolve this issue by allowing C to work in the library or on her own so that she didn't have to be in a class room setting. However, this did not resolve the challenges for her and she was removed from the course in January 2021 due to poor attendance. C herself advised me that she felt she didn't fit in with the other young people on the course and she really struggled to build peer relationships.

Intervention: It was important that C remained in education for the rest of the academic year, as whilst she is bright and academically capable there was a risk of C becoming long term NEET. After discussions with other professionals it was felt that a smaller, more nurturing setting such as a training provider would provide support to help her build emotional resilience and prepare her for a larger college setting in the future.

Although C did not want to engage with education we provided ongoing support. Regular visits to C's placement took place, where we helped her rewrite her CV, apply for part time jobs and look at other courses available to her. A number of avenues were investigated, including online courses, apprenticeships and sports massage courses. C was supported to make her own decisions around these but did not engage with any of the options discussed.

After a few months of continuous support C independently found a Level 3 Sport's course at a college some distance away from where she was living. Initial concerns were raised due to her previous level of anxiety around attending college, and the fact that she would be travelling some distance to and from college. These concerns were discussed with the social worker, and C, but this was the choice she wished to make.

We maintained extremely close contact with C at the start of the academic year. She needed a lot of support in relation to purchasing her uniform, her bursary and sourcing her bus pass. She needed a lot of support around travel and how to communicate with the college when she was going to be absent or late. C can become overwhelmed by such matters, and she needed a point of contact she can talk with. C struggled with matters such as her timetable, or knowing where her class was. She had also recently moved into her own accommodation which could have detrimentally impacted upon her ability to attend education. A multi-agency close working approach was needed to support her. We ensured that close contact was maintained with the college, and her social worker, to ensure that we were all aware in regards of her attendance and that if there were any concerns we could step in at the first instance to try and support her.

Impact of Intervention: By building up a good relationship with C, by supporting her through a challenging time, offering her close support and being there for her whenever she needed support, advice or guidance, we helped avoid her becoming long term NEET. By fully informing

college about C's behaviours and her historic barriers to education enabled them to put in the right support to help C and resulted in them treating her with empathy, when things were not going well.

Over time, C began to rely on support less and less, and became more independent. Concerns remained around attendance, but it was a huge improvement from previous settings. College were understanding of her needs as they were fully informed, and this meant that they were able to put in reasonable adjustments, such as changing one day of her timetable to online to help reduce her travelling. She still requires reassurance, but at a lesser level. She has built trusting relationships with her tutors. Her self-confidence has increased and she has greater faith in her own abilities.

We were very concerned at the beginning of the year in regards to this young person and that this placement would fail, however it has been successful. This is of course greatly down to C herself, and she advises that she enjoys the course and likes the people. C has been able to progress in her independence due to the great support network she has had around her through all professionals and we are sure that without that support she would not have been able to manage as well as she has done. She has long-term aspirations to go to university and become a physiotherapist, and I have every faith that she can achieve this.

She has now turned 18, but both C and college are aware that we are still here to support her until the end of the academic year.

3.2 Example of young person S

School Context: S previously attended S V School which is an independent smaller setting for young people who have emotional support needs and find accessing education challenging. School reported that her behaviour was sporadic and she struggled to maintain relationships with other young people and build positive relationships with staff. S can have emotional outbursts and display inappropriate language. She finds being challenged difficult to manage and can find it incredibly difficult to work within rules and boundaries.

Intervention: Initially S enrolled on Health and Social care at College but experienced a panic attack on the day of enrolment and did not feel she could attend the course. She had also moved Home and been through a large period of change and disruption. This was communicated to me via the social worker, and I made contact with the home setting at this time to discuss support for S and what steps could be made to support her in regards to education. After discussions around alternative options such as training providers and other courses, S was enrolled on Painting and Decorating Level 1 from September 2021 at College as this was her pathway of choice. This transition was always going to be a challenge for S taking into account that she had previously been in a smaller, independent, specialist setting and was moving into a mainstream larger college with lower levels of support.

I contacted college and made the appropriate arrangements for S to enrol on the Painting and Decorating course. I supported home and S to ensure that she applied for bursary, bus pass etc. I contacted the college and ensured that the Looked After Children coordinator understood S's needs and to contact me if there were any issues.

Over the next 6 weeks there were some incidents of concern raised by the college in relation to behaviour, and S's unwillingness to wear safety gear and follow instructions. S was removed from college at the end of October, this was challenged by the Virtual School and a meeting was then held where college agreed S could return. However, the initial meeting with her tutor was not successful and S decided not to return to the course.

S was not in education or training and was eager to gain employment. I worked with S at this time to look at other education options available to her as she still needs to develop her English and maths skills towards gaining a grade 4 at GCSE. I worked closely with the social worker and with the support staff and home, and have also visited S in person to get to know her. I

discussed the GAP programme with S which is run by Wolverhampton College, and is a qualification to support young people to develop employability skills, maths and English, self-esteem etc.

S was not sure at first that this was something she wished to engage in, and I gave her some time to consider this. S agreed to give the course a go, and I contacted the college to make arrangements for her to attend an interview, which they agreed to on the understanding that if she didn't turn up for the appointment they would not give her a second chance. S did not turn up to the interview on the day, but college did agree to make a second appointment for her, which she did attend.

S is now attending the GAP programme, and there remains some issues around her behaviour and willingness to undertake all the work. However, I have built a good relationship with S and with her support at home, so am able to pick these up as they occur and communicate effectively with the college. S will continue to need close monitoring as she progresses through this year, and hopefully she will have the skills she needs to progress onto a level 1 course from September 2022.

Impact of Intervention: Initially S needed support to find an alternative course after she decided that she could not attend the Health & Social care course, and without guidance I believe she would have found it difficult to enrol on another course. Whilst there were concerns around her ability to manage the environment and course she chose, she was fully supported to enrol as this was her choice. When this was not successful I believe that without intervention S would have remained NEET long term and would have been very reluctant to engage with any kind of education. S was not in any education or training for a period of 2 months, during November and December, returning to college in January 2022. This would have been much longer without intervention and support.

3.3 Example of young person - J

J is 20 years old and lives with his Aunt and extended family.

J left school after staying on in year 12; he felt that it wasn't right for him as he says he had never enjoyed school. J went onto Walsall College to study health and social care; his aspiration was to be a social worker. J achieved a level three qualification and was in two minds to either continue his studies at university or find employment.

J & I talked this through – weighing up all of the pro's and con's; following several discussions around education, employment and training with appropriate information, advice and guidance J explored the opportunities around apprenticeships. J was introduced to both David Hughes, Childrens champion and Helena Baxter to further explore routes into youth participation and local authority ring fenced apprenticeship vacancies.

J attended virtual CiCC forums and was informed of the part time apprenticeship within the Council and was encouraged to apply. As part of the preparation for this we practiced interview skills, how to present yourself and talked through some of the possible questions you could be asked. J felt confident in attending 2 interviews; one that was a participation apprentice and one that was a youth justice apprentice.

J was successful in obtaining the apprenticeship and he is now working alongside professionals like probation officers, social workers and substance misuse practitioners. This is a great opportunity for J to absorb different experiences from a variety of services and how they work together. J will experience supervision, all working towards preparing J for his long term aspirations.

J has settled in well, he is really happy in his current position and has stated that he really enjoying working with young people and can see now, both sides, meaning the struggles young

people have and the professional side of the role working towards positive outcomes for young people. J says he can relate to the young people he engages with and has a better understanding of how they feel and what support can be put in place to reduce risk factors.

J & I continue to talk about his future aspirations; his passion is to work with and support young people. He wants to use his own experiences in a positive way and this could still mean that he will pursue a career in social work. J is aware of the apprenticeship levy; he feels this route suits him better as he is able to gain experience and earn money at the same time.

From my knowledge of J I agree with him; he has struggled in formal education settings in the past and albeit he is aware of the support he can receive to attend University this is just not something he wants to pursue. J is flourishing in the work environment and has a great work ethic.

4.0 Conclusions

Our aspirations for our young people are high.

We need to continue to create work opportunities and placements within the private sector and strengthen our local offer to care leavers around employment.

We continue to work in partnership with external organisations to explore not only employment opportunities but also education and training opportunities to support our young people to be able to access suitable services to bridge the gap in allowing them sources to actively engage in the labour market actively.

Corporate Parenting Board

4 April 2022

**Agenda
Item No. 7**

Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report

Report:

The terms of reference for the Corporate Parenting Board state that an annual report shall be produced for submission to Council.

The draft annual report is appended to this report for the Boards consideration.


Recommendations:

That the Corporate Parenting Board comment on and approve the annual report for submission to Council.

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Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2020 – 2022



Walsall Council



Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the annual report of the Corporate Parenting Board which covers the 2020-21 and 2021-22 municipal years. As corporate parents, we take our duties toward looked after children and care leavers seriously and are committed to providing the best possible support to meet their needs.

The Corporate Parenting Board provides a welcoming forum for children looked after and care leavers. We have endeavoured to ensure that the way we engage with young people is meaningful. As meetings moved online due to the Pandemic, we introduced a Shadow Board held in private to capture feedback from young people, to inform the Board which met in public and streamed on YouTube. It appears that this was a success as a representative of the Children in Care Council has said:-

"I really enjoyed the Shadow Board, I found it interesting and it was nice to meet the people, I felt it was good that people was listening to my views" - Representative of Children in Care Council.

Within this report are details of the issues considered and outcomes achieved are set out. It is important to acknowledge that the Shadow Board has effectively contributed to these outcomes and shaped the Boards thinking around many of the items considered. -. It is my view that the Board has made great progress and continues to influence services available for young people who are looked after and leaving care.



Councillor Tim Wilson
Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board

The Corporate Parenting Board

The purpose of the Corporate Parenting Board is to assist the Council fulfil its legal obligations and responsibilities towards children looked after and leaving care by providing strategic direction to ensure they are effectively supported to reach their potential. Walsall's Corporate Parenting Board provides a welcoming forum for children and care leavers to discuss and influence the full range of services available to them. The Board convenes six times a year and comprises seven councillors (as below) together with the following advisors:

- The Designated Nurse LAC (Clinical Commissioning Group)
- The Head of the Virtual School.
- The Director Customer Engagement.

Advisors provide crucial contribution and expertise, in relation to their specialist areas, which are important to the lives of all young people in care/care leavers. Other attendees include the Executive Director (Children's Services), the Director of Children's Social Care and the Children and Young Peoples Champion together with officers from children's services and other directorates whom attend when requested to discuss key issues. By including these advisors we are helping to ensure that Walsall Council and Partner agencies have a joint commitment to corporate parenting in order to achieve continuing improvements in outcomes for our children and young people in care and care leavers.



Councillor Wilson
Chair of the Board



Councillor Worrall
Vice Chair



Councillor Ferguson



Councillor Hicken



Councillor M. Nazir



Councillor Murphy



Councillor Mazhar

Hearing the Young Persons Voice

The Covid-19 pandemic provided emergency legislation to enable Council Committee meetings to operate virtually. Once the legislation expired on 6th May 2021 elected members were required to attend committee meetings physically.

In Walsall, meetings recommenced physically but in a hybrid way to allow physical attendance by Committee Members and remote attendance by presenting officers, with meetings streamed to You Tube.

This presented a challenge for the Corporate Parenting Board as young people are invited to attend each meeting to ensure they have a voice. It was agreed that it would not be appropriate for those young people who were looked after or previously looked after, to be part of the meeting which was broadcast onto YouTube.

In order to ensure that engagement with young people continued, the Corporate Parenting Board met as a Shadow Board in private. The Shadow Board included all elected members and young people (via Teams) directly before the full Board meeting. This provided Members of the Board with the opportunity to listen to the views of young people and this influenced the work of the Board.

This arrangement was revised to be more effective and engaging for young people. The Shadow Board continued to focus on the voice of the child with a reduced attendance to facilitate a more open discussion and be more welcoming to young people - the Chair and Vice-Chair are the only Member attendees. All young people are encouraged to attend the Shadow Board, and a representative of the 'Children in Care Council' attends the formal Board to represent their views, Co-Chair the Young People Engagement item and provide feedback and challenge.

Work Programme

The Board has considered a number of matters during the 2020-21 and 2021-22 municipal year. All reports and associated minutes are available to view on the council's website. Items considered have included:-

<input type="checkbox"/> Young People Engagement	<input type="checkbox"/> The Regional Adoption Agency
<input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly Performance information	<input type="checkbox"/> The Fostering and Adoption Annual Reports
<input type="checkbox"/> The Local Offer	<input type="checkbox"/> CCG Assurance report
<input type="checkbox"/> Health History document	<input type="checkbox"/> Performance of the Virtual School and NEET
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing and accommodation needs for Young People	<input type="checkbox"/> Increasing Employability for Care experienced Young People
<input type="checkbox"/> CAMHS and emotional wellbeing of Children in Care and Care Leavers	<input type="checkbox"/> Independent Visiting Service Annual report
<input type="checkbox"/> Development of a website and app for Children in Care	<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Parenting Strategy

Outcomes

Young People Engagement

The Board is passionate and strive to improve engagement with young people. The Children and Young Persons Champion supports the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and provides a valuable link between the Board and young people. The CiCC is the forum where Walsall's looked after children, young people and care leavers are able to shape and influence the parenting and support that they receive. The forum enables young people to build friendships, peer networks whilst learning new skills. The Chair was fortunate to be invited to a CiCC meeting via 'Teams' in July 2021 and had the opportunity to participate in discussion with young people.

A number of Board Members attended a litter pick in Willenhall on 15 January 2022, which was organised by one of the young people that attends the CiCC, as a result of a letter she wrote asking the Council to do more about her local community making it cleaner and nicer, this has further developed the relationship with young people.

A report on 'Young People Engagement' is taken to each Corporate Parenting Board meeting, the report highlights activity at CiCC, key updates, partnership working and it also details celebrations and achievements of young people.

Walsall Local Offer

It is a requirement for Local Authorities to publish information about services offered to care leavers and other services that may assist care leavers to transition to adulthood and independent living. This is done through the Local Offer and includes financial support, housing, health, education and training, Members received information on the current offer for care leavers and were consulted on additional support in the future. In Walsall the Local Offer covers the following main areas:

- Health and well-being
- Relationships
- Education and Training
- Employment
- Accommodation
- Participation in society

The Board had received feedback from young People at the Shadow Board that the 'setting up home grant' of £2000.00 was not adequate and needed to be increased to support young People. Subsequently the Board were assured, that as a result of this feedback, that the grant received by care leavers to equip new homes would be increased to £2500.00.

Housing accommodation needs for Young People

The Board received the findings of a joint audit undertaken by 'Money, Home, Job' and Children's Services in respect of children leaving care as they transition in adulthood. The key findings of which would be used to inform the Local Offer for Care Leavers. The Board were advised that fifty young people who had left/were

leaving care had been reviewed, and taken part in focus groups. This has resulted in the identification of key areas for improvement for transition planning for care leavers. In considering the findings of the audit and the feedback received from young people, the following recommendations were approved and demonstrate the influence and the importance of gaining feedback from the Shadow Board.

1. The development of a training flat is costed and a report is presented to the Directorate Management Group for consideration. This has been progressed and the training flat will be integrated into the Local Offer in 2022/23.
2. The decision to evict a care leaver from local authority housing accommodation will only be made by the Director of Customer Engagement (or a delegated substitute) following consultation with the Director of Children's Social Work. Whenever safe, and practical to do so, these Directors will jointly develop a plan, with the aim of preventing the eviction from occurring. It was agreed to implement this recommendation.
3. The Board asks Walsall Council to develop a rent guarantor scheme with Registered Social Landlord/s in Walsall and a report is presented to the Directorate Management Group for consideration. A rent guarantor scheme has been developed with Walsall Housing Group, and has been included in the Local Offer.
4. The Local Authority meets the first month's rent for young people to reduce the risk of young people entering debt and a report is presented to the Directorate Management Group for consideration. There are number of measures in place to ensure that young people were financially supported.
5. The Board asks the Housing and Welfare Team to explore the costs associated with improving the offer to young people leaving care to help support them with the expense of setting up and managing their home. A business plan will be developed, and taken to Cabinet, to seek approval for any additional funds that may be required to support the development of this scheme. The 'Setting up Home Grant' was increased from £2000.00 to £2500.00 and applies to all young people leaving care and irrespective of where they choose to live.
6. The Corporate Parenting Board visit the range of accommodation options provided for children leaving care and care leavers, when it is safe to do so. Plans are in place to progress this recommendation from March 2022 due to restrictions related to the pandemic.

Performance

A quarterly performance report is taken to the Board with a dashboard of measures detailing the direction of performance.

Members provided challenge on those measures where performance had dipped and sought reassurance that action had been taken to rectify any issues. An example of this was the percentage of Children in Care with an up to date dental check. The Board were informed that this was a national issue caused by the pandemic and national lockdowns. In order to ensure this issue was resolved the Board requested, a briefing on data relating to dental appointments for children in care. Subsequently, at the request of the Board, the Chair wrote to NHS England to highlight the importance of dental checks for looked after Children. The most recent report demonstrated that performance in this area had drastically improved.

Corporate Parenting Strategy

The Corporate Parenting strategy outlines the priorities for supporting looked after Children and sets a framework for the council and partners to be held accountable on their promises. The previous Corporate Parenting Strategy was published in 2017, following the approval from the Corporate Parenting Board. Building on the foundations of the existing strategies vision, aims and priorities, the council has developed a proposed corporate parenting strategy which aligns with the Corporate Plan and the changed legislative and national policy context. The Corporate Parenting Board received the revised Strategy at its meeting on 11 January 2022. Delivery against the strategic priorities within the strategy will be monitored by the Corporate Parenting Board. Further consultation and engagement will take place with children in care and care leavers with publication planned for March 2022.

The following priorities within the strategy were agreed, a list of commitments to children and care leavers, developed and agreed by the young people themselves and endorsed by the Corporate Parenting Board.

- Safety and Permanency
- Mental and Physical Health and Wellbeing
- Education and Employment
- Transitions and Independence
- Influence and Involvement

Every Elected Member and officer within a council has a statutory responsibility to make good decisions for children in care and care experienced young people (also known as care leavers) as a parent would for their own child, in this context councillors are Corporate Parents. Members of the Board considered the importance of Elected Member being effective corporate parents and in recognition of this the Board recommended that a programme of mandatory training for Elected Members in developed to support them in their role as a corporate parent.

Fostering and adoption service

The Board receives an annual report of the adoption service, which is provided through adoption@heart – a regional adoption agency, providing adoption services on behalf of Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton Councils. The service is hosted by Wolverhampton City Council and became operational in April 2019. Information provided to Members included the number, type and age of children waiting for adoption and the length of time waiting and the number of children adopted. Reports provided detail of recruitment of new adoptive parents. Members provided challenge to this information and sought assurances.

The Board also receives an annual report of the fostering service. The Walsall Fostering Service is located within the Children's Services Directorate of Walsall Council. A range of information is provided to the Board, including the challenge of recruiting new foster carers. In response to this the Board recommended Walsall Council review the advertising of independent fostering agencies on traffic islands and that Walsall Council identify advertising space for the Council fostering service (free of charge). The Director Customer Engagement agreed to raise this issue at the appropriate Proud programme work stream.

Employability for care experienced young people

Care leavers have poorer educational and life outcomes than the general population on average, and are underrepresented in higher education. All universities and colleges must now consider care leavers in their access and participation plans in order to encourage and support them into higher education. However only 6% of care leavers nationally (and from Walsall) going into higher education. In regards to training and employment opportunities, many of our care leavers have not been afforded the stability that allows them to gain the skills that would make them more employable within the job market. This often leads to poor outcomes in all areas of their lives including maintaining suitable accommodation, experiencing poverty, mental health issues and involvement in criminality. The Board considered the data and the range of activity which aimed to improve this in Walsall. It was recommended by Members that a care leaver mentor scheme, for those looked after children who are interested in attending university, is developed. Members were informed that a number of young people had expressed an interest in joining the police or armed forces. In response to this, at the request of the Board, the Chair wrote to the West Midlands Police to request that a proportion of apprenticeships were ring fenced for care leavers. Further to this a positive response was received from West Midlands Police to confirm that they would be happy to work with looked after and previously looked after young people, and suggested that a Cadet Unit could be opened. There was also a commitment to offer volunteer opportunities for 17-18 year olds as Cadet Leaders. Further to this a proposal the response stated that a proposal would be taken to the governance board requesting that looked after and previously looked after children have opportunities to work with the police in Walsall in a similar way to other areas.

Assurance report CCG

The assurance report provides an overview of the statutory health responsibilities of the CCG in relation to children in care and provided further detail of action taken to deliver on-going improvements to health outcomes for looked after children.

As a result of the information presented the Board recommended that the CCG are asked to review the KPI's for 'Initial Health Assessments' and 'Review Health Assessments' to ensure that measures were ambitious enough to deliver on-going improvements for looked after children.

The Chair, on behalf of the Board, wrote to NHS England to highlight the importance of dental checks for looked after children.

Health Passports in Walsall

The Board received a report detailing the findings of an audit of the views of young people in relation to the health passport. The health passport provides a concise account of a young person's health and any significant health issues. The Health Passport is a quick reference guide to confidential details about a young person's personal health. It is a unique document, which holds individual confidential information and can only be viewed with the permission of the young person who owns it. It is recommended that Care Leavers have access to their health history and that they are enabled to be equipped to manage their own health needs wherever possible. As part of the process young people had given feedback that they would prefer a digital passport rather than a paper copy and suggested that the format needed updating. Currently this document was not shared with Children's Services and was provided for young people's use only. It was suggested that greater involvement with Personal Advisors and Social Workers in relation to the health passports would be beneficial in the future. At a subsequent meeting assurance was provided that the Trust had taken on board the feedback from young people and were considering a 'health passport app' (on trial at Sandwell Council).

Independent Visiting Service Annual report

An Independent Visitor is described as a trained volunteer who is there to "befriend and support children and young people in care" The statutory guidance states that the appointment should be considered as part of the development of the care plan and looked after review process. The child's wishes and feelings should be ascertained as to whether or not an Independent Visitor should be appointed. 'Change Grow Live' is the Walsall's Independent Visitor provider and this is a sub-regional contract in partnership with Dudley, Sandwell and Telford & Wrekin.

Walsall's contribution has been £10,000 for at least 6 years; this reflects the target number of children for Walsall, which is 10. In consideration of the information presented, the Board recommended that the annual target of 10 children (accessing the Independent Visitor Service) was reviewed and that the revised target is reported back to the Corporate Parenting Board.

Virtual School Annual Report and those Young People Not in Educational Employment Training (NEET)

The Corporate Parenting Board has responsibility to promote the educational achievement of looked after and previously looked after children, to this end Members considered the Virtual School annual report which outlined the activity of the Virtual School and reported on the educational outcomes of Walsall's looked after children and the work carried out to support the education of looked after children during Covid19.

It is acknowledged that, on average, care experienced young people had significantly poorer educational outcomes and life outcomes in comparison to the general population. They are also underrepresented in higher education. Lower levels of stability meant that young people had not always gained skills, which made them employable. The Board considered data on those young people who were not in education, employment or training. The Committee considered this data in comparison to neighbouring authorities, and were assured that the NEET data was comparable regionally. Information was also provided on in house programmes for NEET. Further reports are scheduled to monitor the support provided to looked after and previously looked after children.

CAMHS and emotional wellbeing of Children in Care and Care Leavers

The Board invited a representative of Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Trust to present a report describing the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service in Walsall. Included as part of this report was a description of the Fostering, Looked-After and Adoption Supporting Hub (FLASH) which is a therapeutic service provided by Walsall Children's Services, that offers a range of interventions and support to children and young people, foster carers, residential Children's homes, Transitional Care leavers, adopters and Adoption/Fostering Teams. The Board had sought feedback from young people prior to the meeting, and raised these issues with the Mental Health Trust representative to ensure that their voices were heard.

Development of a Website and App for Children in Care

As part of the young people engagement item feedback was received from young people that they were not aware how to access services. Discussions were held on the development of a specified website or app to resolve this issue. The Board recommended that a report is taken to a future meeting of the Board detailing the options for an app to include functionality and accessibility for young people.

Looking Forward to 2022 - 2023

In 2022/23 the Board will continue to deliver its remit and in particular:-

- Build relationships with young people in care and care leavers and be an advocate for them.
- Attend future events and activities with young people to further develop relationships.
- Challenge services and partners to ensure that young people are receiving the best services and given every opportunity to succeed.
- Monitor the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Strategy, and set the Boards remit around its priorities.
- Consult with young people on the refresh of the Local Offer to ensure it is meeting their needs.
- Further promote the development of a website/app for young people.

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CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD TERMS OF REFERENCE

Membership

7 Members of the authority as determined by the Council to include:-

- The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services (Chair);
- The Chair of Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Note: A representative from the NHS shall be invited to each meeting as an advisor.

Substitution

Substitute members may be nominated to the Committee in accordance with paragraph 4 of the Council procedure rules (Part 4), subject to them having undertaken the relevant training as detailed below.

Chairman and Vice Chairman

The Chairman shall be the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services.

The Vice-Chairman will be appointed at the Annual Council meeting for the municipal year.

Quorum

The quorum of the Board shall be one third of the membership, subject to a minimum of two.

Meetings

The Board will meet every eight weeks or thereabouts and will usually meet at the Council House, Walsall at 6.00 p.m.

Access to information

The Board will comply with the Access to Information Rules set out in Part 4 of the Constitution.

Purpose

To assist the Council fulfil its legal obligations and responsibilities towards children looked after and leaving care by providing strategic direction to ensure they are effectively supported to reach their potential.

Remit

Members of the Corporate Parenting Board shall:

- (1) Provide clear strategic direction in relation to corporate parenting to improve the outcomes and life chances of looked after children and care leavers.
- (2) Ensure that Walsall Council and Partner agencies have a joint commitment to corporate parenting in order to achieve continuing improvements in outcomes for our children and young people in care and care leavers.
- (3) Make a demonstrable commitment to prioritising the needs of looked after children and young people.
- (4) Set objectives for monitoring the work of and evaluating the progress of the Officer level 'Operational – Corporate Parenting Steering Group'.
- (5) Develop and sustain clear linkages with Children in Care Council, 'Council 4 Kids', Walsall Safeguarding Children's Board, Walsall Foster Care Association and Partners to include the Police, the NHS and education providers and others.
- (6) Approve a work plan with clear aims and objectives which reflect the terms of Walsall's Corporate Parenting pledge.
- (7) Monitor progress on outcomes and performance indicators for looked after children.
- (8) Submit reports to the Council, the Executive, Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee or such other body as the Board considers appropriate or necessary.
- (9) Submit an annual report to Council in April each year.
- (10) Listen to, consult with and involve looked after children and care leavers and their carer's in the assessment, development and delivery of services, including inviting them to act as advisers to the Committee on a regular basis.
- (11) Develop knowledge and be aware of the experiences and concerns of looked after children and care leavers.

- (12) Promote achievement and acknowledge the aspirations of children and young people and show ambitions and aspirations for all looked after children and care leavers.
- (13) Champion the provision of Council based work placements and apprenticeships for looked after young people.
- (14) Monitor the effectiveness of the Virtual school.

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Corporate Parenting Board Work Programme 2021/22

	<i>Report to AD</i>	<i>18th June</i>	<i>20th August</i>	<i>1st November</i>	<i>27th December</i>	<i>7th February</i>	<i>21st March</i>
	<i>Report to Democratic Services</i>	<i>22nd June</i>	<i>25th August</i>	<i>4th Nov</i>	<i>31st Dec</i>	<i>10th Feb</i>	<i>24th March</i>
	<i>DMT for noting</i>	<i>24th June</i>	<i>26th August</i>	<i>11th November</i>	<i>13th January</i>	<i>10th February</i>	<i>24th March</i>
Lead Officer	Board date	1st July	6th Sept	15th Nov	11th Jan	21st Feb	4th April
David Hughes	Young People Engagement						
Elise Hopkins Helena Kucharczyk	Development of website and app						
Alison Jones	Health Passports						
Jivan Sembi	Local Offer						
Jivan Sembi and Elise	Housing Report						
Mark Tobin Adoption @Heart	Annual Adoption Report						
Mark Burrows	Fostering Annual report						
Helena Kucharczyk.	Performance Monitoring	Q4	Q1		Q2	Q3	
Lorraine Thompson	NEET						
Alison Jones	CAMHS and emotional wellbeing of Children in Care and Care Leavers						
Lorraine Thompson – <i>not required</i>	Assurance report – virtual school	Information.					

Corporate Parenting Board Work Programme 2021/22

<i>to attend.</i>							
Alison Jones	Assurance report –CCG						
Jivan Sembi	Corporate Parenting Strategy				Action plan		
Debbie Sylvester with CGL	Independent Visiting Service Annual Report						
Jivan Sembi	Increasing Employability for Care Experienced Young People						Apprenticeship update Helena Baxter
Nikki Gough/Chair	CPB Annual Report.						