

Corporate Parenting Board

Monday 12 February 2024 at 6.00 p.m.

Conference room 2, Walsall Council House

Board Members Present:

Councillor S. Elson (Chair)
Councillor T. Jukes (Vice-Chair)
Councillor L. Harrisson
Councillor A. Hicken
Councillor V. Waters
Councillor R. Worrall

Officers Present

Colleen Male	Executive Director, Children's Services
Rita Homer	Director, Children's Social Work
Catherine Masterson	Designated Children in Care Nurse - Black Country ICB
Lorraine Thompson	Head of Virtual School
Zoe Morgan	Group Manager
Wendy Harrison-Frazer	Consultant Psychologist CAMHS (Black Country Healthcare Trust)

28. **Apologies**

There were no apologies submitted for the duration of the meeting.

29. **Substitutions**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

30. **Minutes**

A copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2024 were submitted.

(see annexed)

Resolved (Unanimous)

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2024, copies having previously been circulated to each member of the Board, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

31. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest for the duration of the meeting.

32. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act**

There were no items for consideration in private session.

The Board agreed to receive item 7 prior to item 6.

33. **Children in Care FLASH/CAMHS report**

The Consultant Psychologist presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). Members were informed that the team provided a therapeutic service to children and young people in the care of Walsall Local Authority, and/or adopted, that presented with mental health difficulties. The service provision in Walsall was described. It was noted that historically, Walsall CAMHS have not had a commissioned service for children in care at a specialist level (tier 3 – Getting More Help). Due to harmonisation across the Black Country Healthcare Trust (BCHFT) discussions with the Local Authority had taken place to consider the design of existing contracts and this had inadvertently affected recruitment. The Board was assured that work was under way to rectify this issue.

The services offered to children and young people were described and included direct therapeutic work. The average wait for a first appointment was 10 weeks, and data indicated that each child was subsequently immediately allocated and offered their next therapeutic follow up within a week of the professional meeting taking place.

Members acknowledged the fantastic work of the team, however in consideration of the recruitment issues, requested an update on the service to the Board, in 3-4 months.

A discussion was held around the work that the team carried out within residential homes and the benefits that this had for the children. Members also considered referrals by ethnic group and considered if this was representative of the children in care.

Resolved

- 1. That the Children in Care FLASH/CAMHS report be noted.**
- 2. That an update on the service be provided to the Corporate Parenting Board in 3-4 months.**

34. Placement Sufficiency Strategy Update

The Director introduced the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The placement sufficiency strategy outlined Walsall Council's responsibilities regarding providing sufficient accommodation for children in their care, within 20 miles of home and within the local authority boundary wherever possible and appropriate.

The Board was advised that Walsall had an ambitious Placement Sufficiency Strategy for 2023-2026 setting out the intention on how to fulfil its duties and meet the needs of children in care and care experienced young people. This report served as an update to the progress of the strategic objectives set out within the strategy presented to Corporate Parenting Board on the 4 September 2023.

Members were informed that Walsall's Mockingbird Hub was very successful and nationally recognised. The new Horizon Fostering Scheme was described as a scheme which moved children back into a family environment supported by a financial package which expected that foster carers were at home full time to ensure they could meet the needs of the children in their care. The service had access to capital funds to improve accommodation and increase capacity. Members were reminded that internal residential homes had increased capacity and as a result more complex children have remained in Walsall.

In response to challenge around increasing the number of foster carers, Officers described the activities taken to increase numbers in Walsall and it was noted that the number of enquiries about fostering had doubling from the previous year. A discussion was held around a contract with WHG to provide accommodation for care leavers. It was noted that the service had a contract with WHG which offered care leavers ready for independent living accommodation. This provided 12 rolling properties to provide a pathway to tenancy for care leavers.

Resolved

That the Update on the Placement Sufficiency Strategy be noted.

35. Areas of Focus

Councillor Jukes informed the Board that during the last 3 weeks she had visited 3 residential homes, and provided positive feedback.

The date of the next meeting was 2 April 2024, and would be held at the TLC Hub.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 6.45 p.m.

Signed

Date