

Corporate Parenting Board

Monday 4th September 2023 at 6.30 p.m.

Conference room 2, Walsall Council House

Board Members Present:

Councillor S. Elson (Chair)
Councillor T. Jukes (Vice-Chair)
Councillor A. Hicken
Councillor Nawaz
Councillor R. Worrall

Officers Present

Rita Holmer	Interim Director, Children's Social Work
Colleen Male	Interim Executive Director, Children's Services
Zoe Morgan	Head of Service
Catherine Masterson	Designated Children in Care Nurse - Black Country ICB
Jivan Sembi	Head of Service
Lorraine Thompson	Head of Virtual School

6 **Apologies**

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Latham.

7 **Substitutions**

Councillor A. Nawaz substituted for Councillor Latham for the duration of the meeting.

8 **Minutes**

A copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2023, were submitted.

(see annexed)

Resolved (Unanimous)

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2023, copies having previously been circulated to each member of the Board, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

9 **Future Governance of Corporate Parenting Board**

The Head of Service presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed).

Members questioned why the recommendations within the report differed to those previously suggested, and Officers confirmed that there was not an appetite for de-constituting the Board at this time. It was stressed that it was important to ensure that young people were engaging with the Board, and it was hoped that Walsall could pioneer a new approach at some point in the future.

Members challenged how other local authorities operated their Corporate Parenting Boards, Officers confirmed that there was no clear best practice model operating. The proposed way of working was described and the difficulties experienced by young people attending formal Board meetings was acknowledged.

It was agreed that the effectiveness of the Board in 'engaging young people' would be on the agenda for the first meeting of the new municipal year to ensure that this was satisfactory.

Members expressed satisfaction with the options proposed within the report and agreed that engagement with young people was very important. Officers agreed that the action plan (detailing feedback from engagement sessions) would be 'rolling' and included on each agenda.

Resolved that:

- 1. That the Corporate Parenting Board remains a committee meeting. Reports, minutes, and the meeting will remain in public and/or private depending on the sensitivities and/or participants for each meeting.**
- 2. That the arrangements for engaging with young people are reviewed by the Corporate Parenting Board in 12 months time.**

10 Placement Sufficiency Strategy and action plan

The Head of Service presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The Board was informed that the report presented the Childrens Sufficiency Strategy for the next three years. Members were asked to consider and comment on the approach and implementation of the 2023-2026 sufficiency strategy.

The aims of the placement sufficiency strategy were described by the Head of Service alongside the summary of needs and trends in Walsall. This included an increase in boys and Black and Asian ethnic groups entering care. Members were informed that there had been a reduction in the number of children living in foster homes (in the previous year) due to a shortage of available foster carers. The service intentions in relation to fostering, residential, supported accommodation, and permanence were detailed along with the priorities and action plan.

In response to a question around unregistered placements Officers confirmed that it was a residential home which was not registered with Ofsted. The legalities of this were discussed and the Board was informed that in such circumstances the Local Authority would work with providers to support this registration. Members were informed that there were not a sufficient number of locally registered providers.

In response to challenge around the right children becoming looked after, the Interim Executive Director stated that through the family safeguarding model families were supported to ensure that children remained in their own homes as this produced better outcomes for the child. The turning point service, which was aimed at adolescents, had been successful in supporting families to stay together. It was stressed that services needed to evolve to respond to societal changes.

A discussion was held on the need for children to be living in communities and to be supported appropriately to do so. Training was carried out through the safeguarding partnership and extensive teamwork took place with partners. Further information was provided on the capital grant scheme, Members were informed that small grants, for building work, could be provided to connected carers to ensure children could remain within extended families.

Further to Member questions, Officers stated that analysis suggested that an increased number of foster carers were needed for boys, older children, sibling groups of 2/3 and more complex children.

Resolved that:

- 1. That the Placement Sufficiency Strategy and action plan be noted.**
- 2. That the Placement Sufficiency Strategy be reviewed in 6 months.**

11 Quarterly Performance Report

The Interim Executive Director presented the report (annexed), highlighting the salient points. The key quarter 1 performance for Children's Services for 2022/23 (relating to children in care and care leavers) was described.

A Member questioned the percentage of children in care who had received a dental check and asked what action was being taken to improve this figure. Officers confirmed that there had been difficulties accessing dental care however a dental pathway had been put in place to improve this issue as such it was expected that it would incrementally improve.

In response to a question the Head of the Virtual School confirmed that there were around 20 care leavers at university. It was agreed that once this information was collated that it would be shared with the Board (via e-mail).

Resolved that:

- 1. The Corporate Parenting Board note the report.**
- 2. The number of care leavers at university will be shared with Board Members once available.**

12 Work Programme 2023/24

Councillor Jukes provided feedback on her visit to Hilton Road residential home, all of which was extremely positive. She read a poem written by a young person in care.

Members discussed the work programme, and were reminded by the Chair that the next meeting would be held at the TLC Hub and would start at the earlier time of 5.30pm to accommodate young people.

Resolved that:

The following changes were made to the work programme:

- The Virtual School Annual report would be moved to April.**
- The Corporate Parenting Strategy would be considered at the next meeting.**

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 7.40 p.m.

Signed

Date