

Council – 9 July 2012

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2012 - 2015

Service: Children's Services

Wards: All

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report refers to an update of the Corporate Parenting Strategy for the period 2012 – 2015 (**Appendix 1**) and will replace the outgoing 2010 – 2013 Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- 1.2 The refreshed strategy is set out in a straight forward manner which is reflective of Corporate Parenting approaches which have emerged through the working exigencies of the Corporate Parenting Board and the key messages received from the Council4kids.
- 1.3 The strategy identifies how these commitments will be monitored through the Corporate Parenting Board, Council 4 Kids forum and through the provision of a multi-agency and partner owned work plan (**Appendix 2**).
- 1.4 The objective is to improve Looked After Children's life chances and outcomes covering key areas of Home, Health, Quality, Education, Leisure, Leaving Care and Council4kids (Children's expectations of care).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Council formally approve and sign off the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2012/2015 which was approved by the Corporate Parenting Board on the 14 May 2012.
- 2.2 That Council approve mandatory Corporate Parenting training for all Elected Members with a target of 50 per cent by the end of quarter 2 and 100 per cent by the end of quarter 3 (currently 26.6% of elected members are trained).

3. Report detail

- 3.1 The strategy sets out our commitment to Children in Care regardless of age, ability, background or whether placed in or outside of Walsall boundaries in the following terms:

Home: To provide Looked After Children with good quality, stable placements where they feel safe and care for by excellent carers who are able to meet their needs.

Quality: To provide good quality services which safeguard Looked After Children and ensures good care planning leading to better life chances.

Education: To ensure that all Looked After Children achieve the best possible educational outcomes in supportive settings and are helped to gain access to Higher Education.

Health: To improve the health outcomes for looked after children including, their emotional wellbeing, and to provide them with appropriate health care, advice and guidance.

Leisure: To support and encourage looked after children to enjoy a wide experience of leisure, culture, sport and social activity to enable them to fulfil their potential and make new friends.

Leaving Care: To support and make provision for looked after children and care leavers in their preparation for the future in terms of making positive choices for independent living, education, employment, training and support networks.

Children in Care Council (Council 4 Kids): To empower and support the role and remit of the Council 4 Kids ensuring that the voice of children helps to drive provision and support to achieve successful outcomes and positive experiences for looked after children

4. Council priorities

The strategy lists several council priority areas as they impact on Looked After Children which are:

- a. To improve educational attainment
- b. To improve placement quality and stability
- a. To increase employment, training and education (for older young people over 16)
- c. To improve quality of accommodation
- d. To improve access to Leisure
- e. To improve pathways between children and adult services
- f. To review care pledges with children

5. Risk management

5.1 The key risks emerging from the measures to respond positively to these needs and risk areas are integral to the Corporate Parenting Service plan, risk register, and the new children's services operating model. The key Issues included in the action plan (**Appendix 2**) are:

- a. Agree revised pledges made by children
- b. Core need to reduce numbers of children in care and provide early support
- c. Measures to increase EET for Care Leavers
- d. Measures to increase numbers of key stage 4 achieving
- e. Improving the impact of CAMHS to looked after children through a revised strategy
- f. Active involvement of children placed out of borough

- g. Sufficiency measures to have more children living in local foster care homes and local children's homes
- h. How to ensure continued quality improvements
- i. Focus of CMT improvements

6. Financial implications

Effective corporate parenting is important as it leads to:

- a. Improved outcomes for children enabling them to lead fulfilled lives which contribute to the local economy
- b. Value for money
- c. Good care at an early stage leads to stable placements, less disruption and reduced costs
- d. Fewer complex needs requiring expensive specialist resources
- e. Better performance ratings

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The Corporate Parenting Board is the designated leadership group who are accountable for determining how the Council and Partners will implement and monitor Corporate Parenting in Walsall.
- 7.2 An annual report is produced on the performance and governance of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- 7.3 Corporate Parenting responsibilities are part of the statutory requirement of the Children Act 2004 and Part of Care Matters Guidance (2006) - Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care.

8. Property implications

There are no specific property implications arising from the review of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2012/2015

9. Staffing implications

- 9.1 In general terms it remains paramount to effective Corporate Parenting to have sufficient numbers of social worker and local foster care capacity to meet the safeguarding, support needs and placement needs of Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
- 9.2 There are no other specific staffing implications arising from the review of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2012/2015

10. Equality implications

- 10.1 Looked After Children and Care Leavers, are both vulnerable groups at risk of social exclusion and poor life chances.

- 10.2 The continued development of the Corporate Parenting Strategy will ensure that a relevant range of appropriate responses and support systems exist across the partnership to meet the individual needs of Looked After Children and Care Leavers and address any issues of inequality.
- 10.3 This is achieved mainly by focusing on their positive outcomes which forms a critical part the Children and Young People Plan.

11. Consultation

- 11.1 Members endorsed two key principles for Corporate Parenting in January 2011 which is principles that are maintained within the updated strategy, which are:
- a. Corporate Parenting is the business of all council and its partners.
 - b. We must collectively act as 'pushy parents' to achieve our shared ambition of raising the aspirations and outcomes for children in care.
- 11.2 An Information Report was submitted to Cabinet on 8 February 2012, in accordance with the Councils Constitution (Part 5 – Protocol 9), in relation to the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2010 – 2013. This update included reference to the process for producing a revised 2012/15 Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Cabinet members were asked to note progress and next stages for the continued Implementation of Corporate Parenting Strategy in Walsall.

Additionally, Members were asked to offer their continued support to Corporate Parenting in terms of helping to address the key priorities through the role of Corporate Parenting Champion and by acting as Pushy Parent advocates for Looked After Children and for care leavers.

- 11.3 The final draft version of the 2012 – 2015 strategy was submitted to the Corporate Parenting Board on the 14 May 2012 which identified:
- a. A key issue will be having an updated Action Plan with each identified action being of important to the Corporate Parenting Board.
 - b. A Young Person's version of the strategy will be produced for Young People.
 - c. It was agreed that it would be good to show how many people have had Corporate Parenting training in an appendix to the strategy.
 - d. Corporate Parenting Board agreed that Board Members had until Friday 18 May 2012 to submit any final comments ahead of formal sign off.
- 11.4 A total of 16 elected members attended training on Corporate Parenting Roles on the 11 May 2012, which will help inform future targets. This represented 26.6% of all elected members trained and confident in Corporate Parenting responsibilities. Cabinet discussed this item in June 2012 and indicated that it would like to see a recommendation of this being mandatory for all elected members with a target of 50 per cent by the end of quarter 2 and 100 per cent by the end of quarter 3.

Background papers

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2012/15 and Action Plan (Appendix 1 & 2)

Author

David Bovell

Head of Corporate Parenting

☎ 658355

✉ bovelld@walsall.gov.uk



Michelle Whiting
Assistant Director
27 June 2012

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2012 – 2015



Walsall Council

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Introduction

I am really pleased to endorse the updated Corporate Parenting Strategy 2012 to 2015 as a statement of our intentions to deliver the best possible outcomes for children who are in the care of Walsall Council.

The development of good Corporate Parenting in Walsall has emerged through consultation and partnership with children and young people, practitioners, carers and partner agencies and our collective desire to act as 'Pushy Parents'.

Over the last three years we have focused on improving the quality of our services, supporting the role of the Children in Care Council (Council 4 Kids) and providing new opportunities for our children and young people. Our principle aim is for our Looked After Children and Care Leavers to have the same kind of life chances that we would wish for our own children.

I am delighted to acknowledge that Walsall's Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) has wide partner and Council representation who share responsibility for Corporate Parenting. This shared approach helps to ensure children in care achieve the best possible outcomes across in terms of their health, education, care, leisure, housing and employment.

We have high aspirations for our children and we will consistently listen to their views, wishes and feelings and work with them to achieve and celebrate their hopes and goals.



Councillor Rachel Andrew
Portfolio Holder Children's Services

Our Commitment to Children in Care

This is our commitment as Corporate Parents which we make to every child in our care regardless of age, ability, background or whether placed in or outside of Walsall boundaries. Key commitments and progress we have achieved are listed below:

Home: To provide Looked After Children with good quality, stable placements where they feel safe and cared for by excellent carers who are able to meet their needs

Impact on Children and Young People

Walsall Children's Services in collaboration with Black Country Partners were successful in securing grant funding to introduce specialist treatment foster care placements and a behavioural support programme called KEEP for our local foster carers with planning effectively starting from 2012

We have good quality placement settings for our children with our children's homes, foster homes, adoption and private fostering services all currently achieving Ofsted Judgements of good or outstanding

A new Placement and Resource Team has been created which has driven placement quality and value for money improvements. Significant improvements have been made to the quality of external foster care placements and contact services through new framework agreements, improved partnership agreements for complex need cases and better contract compliance.

We have reduced the number of children in external placements and increased the number of local foster carers available to children in their own communities.

We have secure placement setting for children's homes, foster homes, adoption and private fostering

The Virtual School provides the Early Years Enrichment project and Primary Book project to raise the confidence of carers to enjoy, share and value reading with the Children & Young People in their care.

Quality: To provide good quality services which safeguard Looked After Children and ensures good care planning leading to better life chances.

Impact on Children and Young People

Numbers of Looked After Children reduced significantly with an increased number of permanent placements for children been achieved.

Significant progress has been made in keeping children and young people safe through professional practice including visiting children, quality of care plans and reduced case load sizes

A consultation exercise has been carried out with children in out of borough placements on how they can be actively engaged with Walsall Children's services. This has led to plans to introduce a virtual communication platform. Significant progress in keeping children and young people safe through professional practice development for 'Getting it Right for looked after children' (Dedicated improvement plan)

There is excellent attendance, minimal holiday in term time and first day provision for fixed term exclusions. Only 5.4% of looked after children missed 25 days or more from school during academic year 2010/11.

Education: To ensure that all Looked After Children achieve the best possible educational outcomes in supportive settings and are helped to gain access to Higher Education

Impact on Children and Young People

The Virtual School works with schools, providers, settings, carers, social workers, and Children and Young People to support and promote regular attendance from an early age with a dedicated Key Worker to support, track and monitor children in early years settings.

Support is given to enable access a full quality curriculum with early intervention when a child is not making the expected progress.

The Virtual School works in partnership with local schools, including our local Grammar schools, to raise aspirations through enrichment projects

All carers, schools and social care colleagues receive a newsletter every term from The Virtual School.

A Virtual School Management Committee is established and operational which has a focus on enjoying and achieving in school especially in relation to attainment. Looked After Children are making progress in all key stage areas, many have secured GCSE's results and all year 11 students have secured a post 16+ destination.

Many of our young people secured a number of GCSEs with 13 A - C including English and maths, 15 A* - C, and 1 young person with a Statement of Special Educational Needs achieved 7 A* - C (2011) which can form part of a Higher Education transition pathway*

Personalised programmes are in place for those young people who had become disengaged with education.

No looked after child has been permanently excluded for the last seven years

Looked After Children predicted to make progress in key stage areas with a focus on methods to engage young people at key stage 4 in full time education.

Health: To improve the health outcomes for looked after children including, their emotional wellbeing, and to provide them with appropriate health care, advice and guidance.

Impact on Children and Young People

Health Services have promoted and supported children's health needs in several areas including, delivering multi agency health training to carers and professionals on the needs of looked after children and by introducing a new emotional health (nurse) service for vulnerable children (including looked after children) in our schools.

We have introduced a social pedagogy approach in our Children's homes to strengthen positive relationship with children and have a dedicated child and adolescent mental health worker attached to each children's home. A new Child and Adolescent Mental Health specification is being modelled which will form part of a new wellbeing strategy for Looked After Children.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQ) have been distributed to help assess the support needs and risk issues associated with children's emotional health with an increased response rate. Measures to meet these needs are part of the new Child Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) plan helping to deliver the right type of support which meets the real needs of looked after children

The Virtual School works in partnership with Speech and Language Therapy Service, screening children in year 5 and above for indicators of speech and language difficulties. Early intervention advice is provided and in partnership with schools and the Speech and Language Team looked after children are prioritised and attend appointments.

Leisure: To support and encourage Looked After Children to enjoy a wide experience of leisure, culture, sport and social activity to enable them to fulfil their potential and make new friends

Impact on Children and Young People

We celebrated looked after children and care leavers successes at events including the Excellence Tea Party and Excellent Night Out. Young people helped us to plan and organise these events.

We have a dedicated multi-agency partnership leisure network group which promotes and co-ordinates Looked After Children's regular access to leisure, interests, hobbies and talents.

We have seen a continuation of "Lots of Leisure" programme to support Looked After Children into mainstream local leisure activities

We have prepared training programmes for activity providers to highlight issues affecting looked after children with a view of increasing their access and involvement

Leaving Care : To support and make provision for looked after children and care leavers in their preparation for the future in terms of making positive choices for independent living, education, employment, training and support networks.

Impact on Children and Young People

We have increased Prospects - Work with Care Leavers following a Service Delivery review in 2011 by increasing Personal Advisers (PA's) dedicated to supporting Care Leavers.

A dedicated post is deployed with the Virtual School and works mostly with Years 10 & 11 young people and their Key Worker in the Virtual School to support identified young people at risk of becoming NEET. This role supports young people in care into positive post 16 progressions, usually further education, school 6th form or training. A key part of this role is to work closely with Prospects PAs in the Transition and Leaving Care Team to ensure a seamless transition. Last summer 100% of the Year 11 cohort made a positive post 16 progression.

A dedicated post is deployed with the Transition and Leaving Care team. The aim of these staff is to support 16-18 Care Leavers into education, training or employment. Outcomes for this group are improving this year from 64% in Quarter 1 to 75.8 in Quarter 3 (2011)

We are currently working with TLC, Economic Development and our FE colleges to ensure that some of our Care Leavers are able to access the Walsall Works Apprenticeship programme.

We have increased education, employment and training opportunities for Care Leavers and have achieved the following outcomes for young people

The Virtual School has a dedicated Key Worker who works with those Young People at risk of dis-affection to create personalised learning packages and support their re-integration back into education.

Better Futures (12 month paid work placements):

12 month placement with 1 young person, been in post since July 2011.

2 young people are permanently employed at the council following their 12 month placement.

Apprenticeships:

Adult Social Care have offered a 2 year apprenticeship with 1 young person starting in November 2011 and 1 young person starting in February 2012; 1 young person is awaiting a start date.

IYPSS have offered a 2 year apprenticeship scheme with 2 young people starting in March 2012 and 2 young people awaiting a start date.

Work Experience

2 young people are signed up to do 2 week placements within the Neighbourhoods directorate and 1 young person at a leisure centre and 1 young person at Streetpride depot.

We have introduced a 'stay put' in care policy allowing some suitable care leavers to remain living with their former foster carers under a supported lodger (Stay put care) scheme which, provides extra support for some vulnerable young people and others completing vocational and educational courses and career pathways.

Children in Care Council (Council 4 Kids): To empower and support the role and remit of the Council 4 Kids ensuring that the voice of children helps to drive provision and support to achieve successful outcomes and positive experiences for looked after children

Our Youth Opinion Unite Team (YOU Team) drive our approach to seeking feedback from children and for getting the active involvement of our looked after children through multiple programme schemes for example business planning and involving young people in recruitment process's

New arrangements are in place for getting active involvement of young people and support to the Council4kids (Council for Children in Care) broadening the level of representation and involvement.

Children's pledges were successfully launched and distributed with their implementation being monitored by the Corporate Parenting Board which children attend and hold board members accountable for progressing good Corporate Parenting. Pledges and key successes are as follows -

Pledge 1 - Looked After Children will be involved in decisions made about them when they reach an appropriate age

Success measures

- All young people will have the opportunity to sign their own care plan in the future.
- All Looked After Children are supported to contribute to their reviews by the Independent Review Officer (IRO) through a range of

opportunities for instance, split reviews, attendance, picture exchange and signing, pre-meetings, observation and independent advocacy.

- All looked after children contribute towards their Personal Education Plan and SEN reviews if applicable.

▪ **Pledge 2 - We will always promote stability and encourage placements wherever possible**

Success measures

- Compared to national figures we only had approximately 9% of children who experienced three placement moves during the year.
- We have a clear process's for making sure that children are placed with carers who are approved in ways that meet individual children needs and if we have to change them on occasions we make sure that this is in children's best interest.
- The Virtual School encourages schools to provide first day or internal provision for those children and young people where exclusion is unavoidable.

▪ **Pledge 3 - Passport applications will be a priority for children in long term placements to enable them to take part in daily activity without discrimination**

Success measures

- We surveyed all our foster carers asking them whether they could bring their pets with them which helps us to increase the chances of children been able to bring their pets in foster carers homes
- A questionnaire was sent to all foster carers asking if any child placed with them need a passport which is being used to get passports for children who need one. We intend to provide passports for all children over 10 years old.
- We have set a standard that no children will miss out on a holiday due to not having a passport
- All children over 10 will have a passport by 31/12/2012

▪ **Pledge 4 - We will make sure that all information is in a child friendly manner**

Success measures

- The IRO service have issued induction cards to all Looked After Children promoting participation and where required with the support of child social worker or carers

- All Looked After Children are issued with a welcome pack when entering local foster care and residential placements which explains essential information in a child friendly manner
- We have reviewed Corporate Parenting Pledges with the Council4kids and produced 10 pledges in child friendly format which is now being monitored with measurable targets.
- Corporate Parenting Board has agreed to send updated information which is relevant to their care to children and young people on an annual basis e.g. holiday's with friends

▪ **Pledge 5 - We will support Walsall Council 4 Kids to make sure that Looked After Children in Walsall have a voice**

Success Measure

- The Young People Unites Team now supports the C4Kids and has supported the C4Kids to develop a business plan and operational budget. A future key aim is to support the C4Kids in seeking the active involvement of children placed out of borough
 - The C4Kids have been developing a framework for monitoring the impact of the 10 pledges which will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Board for approval and setting of performance monitoring standards.
 - We are now measuring the number of children in projects and consultation events in order to ensure our services are shaped by children and young people and that we increasing the number of children involved in participation.
- **Pledge 6 - We will support all opportunities for further education or job apprenticeship schemes for all Looked After Children**

Success measures

- We have and will continue to deliver creative programmes to help provide Employment, Education and Training opportunities to Care Leavers such as Better Futures career fare, working with Private Sector and housing providers and working closely with Adult services.
 - All council departments have agreed to play a more active part in education and apprentice schemes including Resources who are developing a mentoring scheme and Social Care who are looking at making additional support for Care Leavers.
- **Pledge 7 - We will improve the quality of training delivered to foster carers to ensure their skills are updated and that they provide a consistent level of care that is available**

Success measures

- We have collaborated with other Black Country Authorities and made a grant bid to the Department of Education to help us to create some specialist foster placements for vulnerable children and to have a new behavioural support system in place for Foster Carers to help meet children's needs.
 - We have made good progress in Foster Carers completion of the induction standards Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) which has increased foster carers skills
 - We have achieved 80% of our children's homes having good or outstanding inspection judgements and our adoption, fostering and private fostering services are all judged by inspectors as good. We intend to maintain a position of at least good across services and at the same time reduce numbers of Looked After Children and numbers of children in local foster care.
 - The Virtual School provides individual and group sessions for carers/parents to enable them to effectively support the education of looked after children.
- **Pledge 8 - All Looked After Children will have access to sporting activities, youth clubs and other similar social activities without barriers or obstacles**

Success measures

- We have reviewed individual service area contributions to leisure and activities and have established a new Leisure Network Group. We aim to be able to ensure and monitor all Looked After Children access to leisure, hobby or Interest ensuring opportunity for all Children in Care
 - The Lots of Leisure programme produced by Leisure has produced learning material which will be used to train the Leisure Network Group and providers on how to promote and engage children in leisure and activity. This will also inform our approach to meeting the needs of Looked After Children placed out of borough.
 - All Looked After Children and their foster carers have access to free swimming and library card schemes
 - Carers/parents support and transport looked after children to enrichment activities provided by the Virtual School.
- **Pledge 9 - Members of the Corporate Parenting Board will meet with the Council 4 Kids monthly**

Success measures

- In recognition of the need to strengthen relationships between board members and the C4KIDS a fun activity is being arranged.
 - C4Kids members attend the Corporate Parenting Board, now attend agenda setting meeting and can (have) been invited to C4kids meetings to develop topics and listen.
 - The majority of Corporate Parenting Board Members received Total Respect Training to help board members to reflect and understand the needs of Looked After Children and consider how they can become better Corporate Parents.
- **Pledge 10 - Every year all Looked After Children will be updated about their rights**

Success measures

- We have reduced the number of children allocated to each social worker and made more social workers available to meet children's needs. Care planning quality has improved, more children are being seen and the relationships between children and social workers are improving.
- Work has commenced on creating a bank of trained Looked After Children to be part of recruitment into key Children's Services positions. This will ensure that children's rights perspectives will be at the heart of who we employ in the future as a quality standard.

Why do we need a Corporate Parenting Strategy?

For our members, employees, carers and partners there can be no more important role than looking after our Looked After Children ensuring they are provided for, cared for and protected. In order for us to deliver improved outcomes a strategy is needed to provide us with a sharp focus on the Corporate Parenting requirements, accountabilities and responsibilities of the Local Authority and Partners.

The strategy helps us to identify the specific services to address high level needs, disadvantage and vulnerability which may not be addressed by other means.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy sets out our collective commitment to our Looked After Children and provides us with a framework for Good Corporate Parenting which is defined by ethics, standards, responsibility, duty and accountability.

In Walsall we have placed our Looked After Children and Care Leavers at the top of the corporate agenda. Corporate Parenting commitments have been promoted at scrutiny panel and full Council alike in terms of making Corporate Parenting a Council and Partnership wide responsibility alongside our collective commitment at all levels to act as pushy parents for children to make a positive difference to their lives.

Strategic Context

The strategy sits within a wider local and national policy context.

The strategy reflects **national** 'Care Matters' policy in terms that it incorporates the recommendations made at the Corporate Parenting stakeholder review held in January 2010, which was independently facilitated by the Care Matters Partnership. The stakeholder review was informed by the views of Children and Young People. Participants included Lead Members, Director Children's Services, Foster/Residential Carers, partners, managers and social workers.

As a result of this, the strategy sets out to improve key outcomes which lead to children and young people having better life chances. Priority areas include:–

- Improving educational progress and attainment
- Improving placement quality and stability
- Enhancing employment, training and education
- Improving quality of accommodation
- Increase access to leisure
- Ensure effective transition routes
- Ensure quality pathway & care planning
- To improve the health and wellbeing for our CYP (health and mental health well-being which is fundamental to achieving all the outcome)
- Reviewing care pledges with children

Locally, the strategy is committed to developing best value for all our services, focusing on quality as well as cost. This principle is embedded in our commissioning framework and is integral to the Children and Young People's Plan as well as our balanced scorecard approach. The Specialist Services Performance Board has set National Indicator (NI) targets based on continual improvements and strategic objectives.

The Children Partnership recognises the importance of prevention and early intervention as the most economic, efficient and effective way to ensure the safety of our children and young people. The strategic priorities are to:-

- Promote higher aspiration and improve progress and attainment in Early Years and all Key Stages.
- Reduce numbers of Looked After Children through early intervention
- Improve maternal health, reduce obesity & promote smoking cessation
- Jobs for young people & parents, including those who have a disability

Above all, the strategy recognises that securing positive and trusting relationships with carers and key-worker (often the social worker) is of paramount importance. These relationships can enable the securing permanent living arrangements for Looked After Children and other measures to prevent them from languishing in care.

How the strategy was developed

The strategy refresh was developed following a progress evaluation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy presented to the Corporate Parenting multi-agency partnership board, determining how the strategy fits with the New Operating Model (NOM) for Children's Services and feedback from children (Council4kids).

Firstly, the detailed evaluation process revealed eight key strategic issues which have been assigned in the action plan which are:

- Agree revised pledges made by children
- Core need to reduce numbers of children in care and provide early support
- How to increase EET for Care Leavers
- How to increase numbers of Key Stage 4 achieving
- Impact of CAMHS
- Active involvement of children placed out of borough
- How to have more children living in local children's homes
- How to ensure continued quality improvements

A separate process determined focus on how the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT) will support Corporate Parenting.

Secondly, the NOM approach is based on evidence of what works well and our own understanding of the needs of our community or in other words founded on the perspective of our customers, who want us to;

"keep me safe from harm and make my life better for me"

The NOM refocuses resources at the front end of our system to provide early help to families which prevent some children from having to come into care in the first place. Walsall has six family support teams helping families cope better. The systems redesign is based on need and support pathways which focus on -

- Reducing the number of children moving up into higher level services such as the need to go into care
- Relentless focus on permanency by increasing the children moving down service levels for instance returning home, Adoption or Special Guardianship
- Redesigning the pattern of placement usage so more children are cared for in local foster care
- Improving the quality, cost and choice of placements

- Reducing the overall length of stay for children in care

Finally, Our Youth Opinion Unite Team (YOU Team) drive our approach to seeking feedback from children and for getting the active involvement of our Looked After Children. Key developments have included the introduction of an apprentice post (former Care Leaver), development of Council4kids business plan, delivery of total respect training (Awareness raising training for professionals and carers working with Looked After Children) and the development of a recruitment training programme for children.

Most importantly, the Council4kids with the support of the YOU team monitor the 10 Pledges developed with young people and hold the Corporate Parenting Board accountable for their implementation. These activities which continue to shape services for example making sure Looked After Children have a passport.

How the strategy will be delivered and evaluated

The aims of the strategy will be delivered through a two part action plan, one section pertaining to the eight strategic progress areas and the second plan pertaining to CMT improvement areas. Each area identified is listed under a commitment area and is cross referenced to the Children's Services bookshelf strategies to ensure that the work stream are properly linked into other strategies for consistency and added value. A lead officer has been identified for each strategic outcome area contained within both elements of the plan.

Individual leads are responsible for their part of the action plan and for reporting on progress to the Corporate Parenting Board which includes Member representation to ensure continued engagement and ownership at a political level.

Members of the Council4kids supported by YOU Team representatives attend each Corporate Parenting Board to keep the Board accountable as the responsible body.

The strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis and evaluated at the end of the three year period.

(Appendix 2)

Corporate Parenting 1 Year Evaluation Action Plan

Strategic Activity	Lead Officer	Progress to Date	Improvement Target & Time Scale	Supporting Strategies
<p>How to have more children living in local children's homes and foster placements</p>	<p>DB</p>	<p>Central Looked After Children list introduced which monitors placements VFM and quality in terms of reduced length of stay and reduced use of external placements</p> <p>Placement data system now lists all internal carer information which drives local placement matching and vacancy management</p> <p>New Placement and Resource Team now operates a placement process which is driving the use of local placements</p> <p>New panel process to be started to steer the appropriate transition of children in external placements into</p>	<p>Framework completed to be made operational by inserting care planning codes (August 12)</p> <p>To be fully incorporated into placement finding system by matching needs profile against all internal placements (July 12)</p> <p>New placement process completed for social work and review teams stipulating local placements. To be embedded through training, review and multi-agency joint working (August 12)</p> <p>Placement and resource Panel in place driving the local authorities sufficiency planning.</p>	<p>VfM</p> <p>Partnership</p> <p>Quality Assurance</p> <p>Engagement</p> <p>Safeguarding Board</p> <p>Corporate Parenting</p> <p>CAMHS</p>

Strategic Activity	Lead Officer	Progress to Date	Improvement Target & Time Scale	Supporting Strategies
		<p>local available placements</p> <p>Marketing and recruitment activity has seen an on-going net increase in local foster placements</p> <p>Specific approval and skills development initiatives underway to enable more children's needs to be met in local placements, local schools and with local CAHMS support</p>	<p>New transition panel agreed (September 12)</p> <p>To contain a recruitment, marketing and customer care element through a SLA to be finalised with corporate communication team (August 12)</p> <p>Improving the quality of foster care Ongoing</p>	
<p>Quality Activity: To provide good quality services which safeguard Looked After Children and ensures good care planning leading to better life chances.</p> <p><i>This is important to the CPB because the effective safeguarding and care planning for vulnerable children who we are the Corporate Parent must be carried out by qualified and competent social workers who are well trained and supported to undertake their essential assessment and intervention work with children. This includes statutory care planning for children leading to better outcomes and is underpinned by workable caseloads in order for social workers to visit children and have a consistent relationship with them.</i></p>				
<p>Core need to reduce numbers of children in care and provide early support</p>	<p>DS</p>	<p>Looked After Children discharges for 2010/2011; to be monitored</p> <p>Step down support is now embedded within the service. Completed</p>	<p>Each child now has a progress plan that is reviewed every 5 weeks at the A&O meeting to ensure the care plan is being actively progressed. Ongoing</p> <p>Wherever possible we are working toward a permanency plan for all children under 14 years of age. Ongoing</p>	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>Corporate Parenting</p> <p>Family Support</p> <p>VFM</p> <p>CAMHS</p>

Strategic Activity	Lead Officer	Progress to Date	Improvement Target & Time Scale	Supporting Strategies
How to ensure continued quality improvements	DS	<p>Staff are now briefed and able to provide information to those carers wishing to pursue a Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order or special guardianship.</p> <p>Every child has an up to date Care Plan</p> <p>Stable work force</p> <p>Reduction in sickness levels</p>	<p>We are working with Legal to identify and progress revocations as swiftly as possible. Ongoing</p>	<p>NEET</p> <p>Health Children Programme</p>
			<p>The intention of the following is to improve practice;</p> <p>Fortnightly briefing sessions from relevant professionals. Ongoing</p> <p>Regular meetings with relevant agencies. Ongoing</p> <p>Staff encouraged to attend more training Ongoing</p> <p>Identity training: Nov-Jan</p> <p>Admin; role and responsibility Ongoing</p> <p>Implement signs of safety Ongoing</p> <p>Redesign care plan awaiting PARIS team</p> <p>More child centred , direct work Ongoing</p> <p>Audits Ongoing</p>	<p>Corporate Parenting</p> <p>Safeguarding Board</p> <p>14-19</p> <p>CAMHS</p> <p>School Improvement</p> <p>Partnership</p> <p>VfM</p>

Strategic Activity	Lead Officer	Progress to Date	Improvement Target & Time Scale	Supporting Strategies
	<p>KD</p> <p>KD/LT</p>	<p>Designated Teacher/partnership Training with a focus on key themes e.g. attachment issues, Total Respect Training</p> <p>Personal Education Plan workshops for social workers</p>	<p>Termly training sessions in place (Ongoing)</p> <p>To meet the ongoing development of social workers and newly appointed social workers. (Ongoing)</p>	<p>Corporate Parenting</p> <p>Safeguarding Board</p> <p>14-19</p> <p>CAMHS</p> <p>School Improvement</p> <p>Partnership</p> <p>VfM</p>
<p>Engagement with out of borough Looked After Children</p>	<p>IV & KW</p>	<p>A potential outcome of consultation may be the development of a virtual communication platform. Actions will be in place by January 2012.</p>	<p>We will have in place various improved methods of communicating with young people in out of borough placements by the end of March 2012.</p>	
	<p>KD</p>	<p>The Virtual School monitor attainment and progress of looked after children placed OOB.</p> <p>The Virtual School works in partnership with other LAs to ensure the best possible provision is being made to meet the education of Walsall's looked after children.</p>	<p>Continual data collection (Ongoing)</p> <p>The Virtual School has established relationships with schools and LAs where Walsall's looked after children are placed.</p>	<p>Corporate Parenting</p> <p>Safeguarding Board</p> <p>14-19</p> <p>CAMHS</p> <p>School Improvement</p> <p>Partnership</p> <p>VfM</p>

Strategic Activity	Lead Officer	Progress to Date	Improvement Target & Time Scale	Supporting Strategies
<p>Education Activity: To ensure that all Looked After Children achieve the best possible educational outcomes in supportive settings and are helped to gain access to Higher Education</p> <p><i>This is important to the CPB as educational outcomes both academic and vocational is in many respects a passport into jobs, careers, university and training leading to more prosperous life chances. Education/school placements often provides children in care with a level of consistency when other aspects of life are changing and is important for teaching children life skills and additional support such as life coaching and extra curriculum support</i></p>				
How to increase numbers of Key Stage 4 achieving	KD	<p>13% (4) pupils achieved 5 A* - C including English and maths</p> <p>38% (12) pupils achieved 5 A* - C</p> <p>56% (18) pupils achieved 5 A* - G</p> <p>75% (24) pupils achieved 1 A* - G</p> <p>All year 11 secured a post 16 destination.</p> <p>5.4% (17) C&YP missed 25 days or more from school</p> <p>There were no permanent exclusions.</p> <p>Many of our young people secured a number of GCSEs e.g. 13 A* - C including English and Maths, 15 A* - C, including Maths.</p> <p>1 young person with a Statement of Special Educational Needs achieved 7 A* - C.</p>	<p>Personalised programmes were put in place for those young people who had become disengaged with education.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Equality</p> <p>Early Years Primary</p> <p>Secondary 14-19</p> <p>School Improvement</p> <p>Corporate Parenting</p>
Tracking and monitoring of progress and attainment.	KD	<p>The Virtual School track the progress and attainment of all looked after children including Early Years.</p>	<p>Regular on-going data collection and attendance at PEPs where necessary. (Ongoing)</p>	<p>Corporate Parenting</p> <p>Safeguarding Board</p>

Strategic Activity	Lead Officer	Progress to Date	Improvement Target & Time Scale	Supporting Strategies
		Early intervention for identified C&YP to meet their diverse and complex needs.	Early identification systems (Ongoing)	<p>14-19 CAMHS</p> <p>School Improvement</p> <p>Partnership VfM</p> <p>Corporate Parenting</p> <p>Safeguarding Board</p> <p>14-19</p> <p>CAMHS</p> <p>School Improvement</p> <p>Partnership VfM</p>
	KD	<p>The Virtual School attend every first PEP and will continue to attend the PEPs of any C or YP whose educational progress is giving cause for concern.</p> <p>In addition the Virtual School meet on more regular basis, in between PEPs with schools to ensure that interventions are implemented and evaluated and revised if necessary.</p>	<p>The Virtual School have regular ongoing dialogue with schools and service to identify the needs of looked after children and highlight provision required to support their needs. (Ongoing)</p>	
<p>Health Activity: To improve the health outcomes for looked after children including, their emotional wellbeing, and to provide them with appropriate health care, advice and guidance.</p> <p><i>This is important to the CPB due to our responsibilities as Corporate Parents to promote the health and wellbeing of children and young people in their care. This entails not only good health surveillance through routine checks but also includes healthy life style monitoring including helping children to manage obesity and preventing risky health behaviours such as smoking or experimenting with drugs. Good emotional health is an essential feature in increasing children's life chances and as such the CPB have a strong emphasis on monitoring the delivery of CAMHS, attachment theory for carers and social pedagogy in our children's homes.</i></p>				
To improve health outcomes and reduce	JC	Quarterly monitoring of health assessments :	Continue to work with Children's Services and out of area teams to	CAMHS

Strategic Activity	Lead Officer	Progress to Date	Improvement Target & Time Scale	Supporting Strategies
<p>health inequalities</p> <p>Impact of CAMHS</p>		<p>86% CYP IHA (2010/11) 93% CYP RHA (2010/11)</p> <p>Q1 RHA 82% completed Q2 RHA 61% " Q1&2 IHA 72% completed within 20 days</p> <p>SDQ carer return increased to 69% (2010/11). Mean average score has improved 15.1 2010 to 14.6 (2011)</p> <p>New CAMHS specification modelled to meet the emotional well being needs of children.</p> <p>New Black Country Programme to introduce 3 treatment Foster Care and behavioural programme called KEEP in Walsall planned September 2012</p>	<p>ensure timely return of paperwork. (Ongoing)</p> <p>To deliver training packages to a range of multi-agency professionals and carers to raise health profile and ensure timely response when health needs are identified. (Ongoing)</p> <p>SDQ have been distributed to carers and process for scoring and evaluation is being agreed for 2012. (Ongoing)</p> <p>School Nursing Service Emotional Health Assessment introduced for all vulnerable CYP (inclusive of looked after children). CAMHS referral pathway. (Ongoing)</p> <p>Specification developed to be finalised and implemented. September 2012</p> <p>Specific recruitment, training and support to identified carers matched to the needs of individual treatment needs of selected children (Part of successful DfES bid) Commence September 2012</p>	<p>Health Children Programme</p> <p>Corporate Parenting</p> <p>Partnership</p> <p>Teenage Pregnancy</p> <p>Equality</p> <p>Child Poverty & Inequality</p>

Strategic Activity	Lead Officer	Progress to Date	Improvement Target & Time Scale	Supporting Strategies
Health promotion and support	JC	Health Services have promoted and supported children's health needs in several areas including.	<p>Delivered multi agency health training to carers and professionals on the needs of looked after children. Ongoing</p> <p>Introduced a new emotional health (nurse) service for vulnerable children (including Looked After Children) in our schools. Ongoing</p>	
<p>Leisure Activity: To support and encourage Looked After Children to enjoy a wide experience of leisure, culture, sport and social activity to enable them to fulfil their potential and make new friends</p> <p><i>This is important to the CPB in order to help children in care who have a difficult start in life to have a fulfilled and happy childhood where they can meet friends in safe environments and enjoy a range of experiences. This allows children to pursue hobbies, interests and talents contributing to good physical and emotional health and in many circumstances lead to positive lifestyles and even educational and career opportunities for care leavers transitioning into Adult life</i></p>				
Active involvement of children placed out of borough	BP/PW	Expansion of multi-agency partnership leisure network programme co-ordinating and promoting and after children – hobbies, interests, talents	<p>Produce golden list of leisure interest for Looked After Children</p> <p>Target children not taking up activities</p> <p>Development work with carers</p> <p>Include leisure pursuits in care planning arrangements. Ongoing</p>	

Strategic Activity	Lead Officer	Progress to Date	Improvement Target & Time Scale	Supporting Strategies
<p>Children in Care Council (Council 4 Kids) Activity: To empower and support the role and remit of the Council 4 Kids ensuring that the voice of children helps to drive provision and support to achieve successful outcomes and positive experiences for looked after children.</p> <p><i>This is important to the CPB as the accountable local authority and partner body responsible for the delivery of Corporate Parenting in Walsall. It is essential that services are shaped by children's experiences and we actively listen to children and young people's views and their journey in care. This is in order to effectively safeguard children and young people and find ways of achieving positive outcomes for them in areas which have been determined by children themselves. This process of listening to children in terms of receiving regular feedback is central to the care planning and review process.</i></p>				
<p>Agree revised pledges made by children</p>	<p>IV & KW</p>	<p>Completed, pledges have been printed and are in the process of being distributed to all Looked After Children and care leavers by the end of November.</p> <p>Pledges will be formally launched on the Excellent Night Out on Friday 18th November 2011.</p>	<p>Council 4 Kids have agreed the majority of the performance indicators. One indicator will be taken back by the Council 4 Kids to the Corporate Parenting Board for further negotiation. Ongoing</p> <p>Council 4 Kids have requested quarterly performance report from the Corporate Parenting Board on the impact of the pledges. Ongoing</p>	<p>CAMHS 14-19 Health Children Programme Corporate Parenting Safeguarding Board</p>
<p>Active involvement of children placed out of borough</p>	<p>IV & KW</p>	<p>Consulting on various methods of communication to improve active involvement of our out of borough children and young people.</p> <p>All Looked After Children receive the newsletter, pledges and invites to events.</p>	<p>Active involvement of Looked After Children has been an ongoing developmental process. Ongoing</p>	<p>Corporate Parenting Engagement 14-19 CAMHS</p>

Strategic Activity	Lead Officer	Progress to Date	Improvement Target & Time Scale	Supporting Strategies
		<p>Extra support is being considered to remove barriers for children to better enable attendance of activities e.g. transport.</p> <p>Close partnership work with the Family Placements Team around managing risk factors with particular young people returning to Walsall.</p>		<p>Partnership</p> <p>Workforce</p> <p>VfM</p> <p>Corporate Parenting</p>
Focus of CMT improvements	DB	See table next page	See table next page	

Corporate Parenting 1 Year Evaluation Action Plan

Directorate	Lead Officer	Strategic Action	Progress to Date	Strategic Link
<p>Quality Activity: To provide good quality services which safeguard Looked After Children and ensures good care planning leading to better life chances.</p> <p><i>This is important to the CPB because the effective safeguarding and care planning for vulnerable children who we are the Corporate Parent for, must be carried out by qualified and competent workers who are well trained and supported to undertake their essential assessment and intervention work with children.</i></p>				
Neighbourhood Services Public Safety	Lynne Hughes / Claire Dhami	Preventative work through Triple P reducing young offending scheme (Looked After Children access)	<p>Working with parents</p> <p>Audit of Looked After Children and potential Looked After Children cases</p> <p>Preventing family breakdown</p> <p>Reducing offending Identify tangible extra factors which support Looked After Children and care leavers September 2012 review</p>	<p>Corporate Parenting</p> <p>Family Support Strategy</p> <p>Active Involvement</p> <p>Engagement</p>

Directorate	Lead Officer	Strategic Action	Progress to Date	Strategic Link
<p>Leisure Activity: To support and encourage Looked After Children to enjoy a wide experience of leisure, culture, sport and social activity to enable them to fulfil their potential and make new friends</p> <p><i>This is important to the CPB in order to help children in care who have a difficult start in life to have a fulfilled and happy childhood where they can meet friends in safe environments and enjoy a range of experiences. This allows children to pursue hobbies, interests and talents contributing to good physical and emotional health and in many circumstances lead to positive lifestyles and even educational and career opportunities for care leavers transitioning into Adult life</i></p>				
<p>Neighbourhood Services Leisure and community service involvement with Looked After Children</p>	<p>Lynne Hughes / Karen Bateman</p>	<p>Review ongoing programme (extend)</p> <p>Leisure centres Outsource adventures Sports coaching Health and Fitness Parks NAG Public safety</p>	<p>Free swimming lessons, free swimming and gym access</p> <p>Short breaks, Aldridge, extended school programmes, special school days and Sneyd / airport adventure activities</p> <p>Promoting inclusion, advise, residential, programme strategies to promote events participation</p> <p>Creative apprenticeships</p> <p>Victims crime/ASB support, complaints support</p> <p>Ongoing Review November 2012</p>	<p>Engagement Corporate Parenting Equality Healthy Children Programme Positive Activities</p>
<p>Neighbourhood Services Libraries, Heritage and</p>	<p>Sue Grainger</p>	<p>Encourage membership of local library: Issue all Looked After Children with</p>	<p>Require list from Children's Services to progress and implement</p>	<p>Early Years Primary</p>

Directorate	Lead Officer	Strategic Action	Progress to Date	Strategic Link
Arts		pre-signed library card		Secondary Corporate Parenting
Neighbourhood Services Libraries, Heritage and Arts	Sue Grainger	<p>Encourage Looked After Children to take part in cultural activities and point them to mainstream services:</p> <p>Continuation of "Lots of Leisure" programme to support Looked After Children into mainstream provision</p> <p>Rolling out training programme to activity providers to highlight issues affecting Looked After Children and access</p> <p>Seek funding to continue work beyond 2011/12</p>	<p>Ongoing- part of Leisure Network Group function</p>	<p>Engagement</p> <p>Partnership</p> <p>Corporate Parenting</p> <p>Healthy Children Programme</p> <p>14-19</p> <p>NEET</p> <p>Positive Activities</p>
Virtual School		<p>The Virtual School provide IROs, social workers and Family Placement Service with a list of names and activities looked after children are involved with via the Virtual School</p> <p>The Virtual School provides enrichment activities for looked after children e.g. Early Years Enrichment Pack, aspirational projects, QMHS girls project, QMGS after school club and Learnmore ICT project.</p>	<p>Updated lists are provided on an ongoing basis to enable key staff to follow up involvement and promote the activity (Ongoing)</p> <p>All activities are in place and monitored by the Virtual School (Ongoing).</p>	<p>Corporate Parenting</p> <p>Safeguarding Board</p> <p>14-19</p> <p>CAMHS</p> <p>School Improvement</p> <p>Partnership VfM</p>

Directorate	Lead Officer	Strategic Action	Progress to Date	Strategic Link
<p>Leaving Care Activity: To support and make provision for looked after children and care leavers in their preparation for the future in terms of making positive choices for independent living, education, employment, training and support networks.</p> <p><i>This is important to the CPB as the planning process for care leavers into adulthood is one of the most important considerations for the Corporate parent and often one of the most traumatic experiences for our children and young people. Children must be supported in every respect will formal care planning with regard to accessing Education, Employment and Training.</i></p>				
Neighbourhood Services	Maria Gilling	WACC has worked up a work experience directory and protocol for Neighbourhood Services	Identification of relevant care leavers to participate in work experience opportunities and provide schedule Ongoing Review November 2012	14-19 NEET Corporate Parenting Partnership Engagement
Neighbourhood Services Libraries, Heritage and Arts	Sue Grainger	School work experience opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning through shadowing and mentoring • Work placement 	Placements offer being coordinated through WACC Ongoing Review November 2012	Partnership NEET 14-19 Corporate Parenting Engagement
Adult Service (Social	Sean Cook	Substantial review of Children to Adult	Produce centred planning for YP	Corporate Parenting

Directorate	Lead Officer	Strategic Action	Progress to Date	Strategic Link
Care) Access, Assessment and Care Management		<p>Services transition.</p> <p>New work models (working with neighbourhood and supporting local communities)</p> <p>Adult Services restructuring will enable closer work with communities and vulnerable adult groups including specific support for care leavers September 11</p>	<p>in transition September 2012</p> <p>Individual budgets (IB) at 18 September 2012</p> <p>Strengthen connections for care leavers using Adult Services transition pathways e.g. Job Centre Plus and network planning</p> <p>Social Care briefing sessions for managers August 2012</p> <p>Audit of children with a disability requiring continuing care/health care post 19 August 2012</p> <p>Link to work August 2012</p> <p>Transition planning for disabled/LDD children (enhancing quality and outcomes) August 2012</p> <p>Extend support services to care leavers e.g. use of voluntary sector agencies August 2012</p>	<p>14-19</p> <p>NEET</p> <p>Partnership</p> <p>Engagement</p> <p>Disability Strategy</p>
Human Resources	D Duncombe / C O'Neill	Work Experience Policy to include narrative on the Council's approach to	Work Experience Policy- C O'Neill will be commencing this	14-19

Directorate	Lead Officer	Strategic Action	Progress to Date	Strategic Link
		<p>work experience and indicate priority areas such as school students, care leavers and disabled participants. Envisaged to include a "how to organise work placements" toolkit for managers and HR will maintain a signposting service to placement applicants but not a coordination role as previously undertaken.</p> <p>HR will allocate an officer to play a supporting technical role to the managers who are leading on the specific areas of activity including mentoring scheme for Care Leavers.</p>	<p>activity and will aim to have a policy compiled at the earliest opportunity. November 2012</p>	<p>NEET Corporate Parenting Engagement Partnership</p>
Regeneration Services	Jane Kaur-Gill	<p>Young People's Apprenticeship Scheme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design of the programme to maximise the use of available resources in support of people aged 16-18 and 19+ including accommodation • Programme to accept young people from a variety of backgrounds, with places available for Looked After Children. 	<p>Launch in August 2012</p>	<p>14-19 NEET Corporate Parenting Engagement</p>

Colour Code: Core Strategy: Health & Wellbeing = Yellow; Vulnerable Children = Green; Aspiring and Attaining = Red; Social Inclusion and Progression to Adulthood = Purple; Working Smarter = Blue