

Minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board held in Conference Room 2 at the Council House.

Monday 1 July 2024 6.00 PM

Committee Members present:

Councillor S. Elson (Chair)
Councillor T. Jukes (Vice Chair)
Councillor A. Hicken

Officers Present:

Rita Homer – Director, Children’s Social Work
Lorraine Thompson – Head of Virtual School
Catherine Masterson – Walsall ICB
Elyse Hopkins – Director, Customer Engagement
Andy Caville – Team Manager, Corporate Parenting
David Hughes – Children’s Services

Two Young People

26. Apologies

An apology was submitted on behalf of Councillor Nasreen.

27. Substitutions

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

28. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

29. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There was no information in private session.

30. Minutes

The Board considered the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd April, 2024.

Resolved

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd April, 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

31. **Establishment of a Work Programme 2024 –2025**

A report was submitted:

[annexed]

Members of the Board received a presentation and noted that, within the Corporate Parenting Board annual report 2023/24, the Board set out its priorities for 2024/25 as: -

- Continue to review and evolve the approach to engagement with young people to make engagement meaningful.
- Build relationships with children and 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 associated action plan and set the Boards remit around its priorities.

Resolved

- 1. That the work programme of the Corporate Parenting Board for the 2024/25 municipal year be agreed.**
- 2. A Total Respect training course be organised at the earliest opportunity for all Elected Members.**
- 3. That the Board considers member champion nominations to visit residential homes.**

32. **Events and Engagement**

The Board received a presentation;

[Annexed]

Members of the Board praised the work undertaken to engage with children in care and care leavers. Of note was the care experienced football team which had competed at an event at the Molineux football grounds. It was a well-attended and highly regarded event. Young people present at the meeting agreed that it was a good event and also provided opportunity to connect and make friends with care leavers from other boroughs.

When asked by the Chair what could be improved, young people explained that additional out of hours services would be helpful, including football training, as this was when young people had more time.

Mr Hughes explained that Oak Park provided the pitch for free during less busy times but prioritised fee paying clients in busier periods. The Chair undertook to review this issue.

Resolved

That the Chair, in consultation with officers, reviews the request for out of hours playing pitch provision at Oak Park.

33. Quarterly Performance Report

A report was submitted:

[annexed]

The Director, Children's Social Work provided an overview highlighting that there was a:-

- slight increase in children in care placed 20 miles from home, outside of LA boundary;
- reduction in the number placed in residential homes as a first placement;
- significant increase in special guardianship in 22/23 and 34 between April and March 24

Referring to Initial Health Checks, a member asked what was in place to improve the figure as 49.7% were not undertaken within 28 days. The ICB Lead explained that there were 2 paediatricians offering 16 clinics per month and that a business case for additional resource would be considered.

Whilst staying put was positive, a member asked if this impacted on foster care provision? The Director of Children's Social Work confirmed that staying put was the best thing for young people and so whilst there was an impact on Foster Carers, the Council had a strong offer and marketing campaign to recruit. It was also confirmed that when young people moved on many individuals who had entered into staying put arrangements, go back to offering foster care provision.

The Board considered safely reducing numbers of children in care, noting that the number was 648. The Director of Children's Social Work explained that the early help offer and multi disciplinary approach such as family outreach services could help safely reduce the number of children in care.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

34. Walsall Care Leavers Joint Protocol

A report was submitted:

[annexed]

The Director of Children's Social Work referred to the Open Lens production 'It Takes a Village' which delivered a real and honest insight into the everyday challenges faced by young Care Leavers and focuses on themes of independence, accommodation, and mental health.

Following the production of 'It Takes a Village' there was a call to action whereby the Council and its partners committed pledges to supporting children and young people specific to the issues raised by them.

The intention of forming a Children in Care and Care Experienced Alliance is to build on the learning of the Walsall Children's Alliance and form an alliance committed to achieving the pledges committed by wider partners.

The Director of Children's Social Work confirmed that the Board would have oversight of the action plan, produced by the alliance, to monitor progress.

The Chair and members supported the establishment of the Alliance and thanked staff within children's services for continuing to listen and change services to meet the needs of children in care and care leavers.

Further to a discussion as to how to share the video with all members of the Council the Principal Democratic Services Officer agreed to liaise with the Chair outside of the meeting.

Resolved

That:-

1. The formation of a Children in Care and Care Experienced Alliance be approved;
2. Terms of Reference be approved; and
3. Corporate Parenting Board oversee the action plans developed within the alliance
4. The principal Democratic Services Officer meets with the Chair of the Board to confirm arrangements for the 'It takes a village' to be shown to all members.

35. **LGA Placements for Children in Care Resource Pack**

The resource pack was submitted:

[see annexed]

Members noted that the resource pack has been published by the Local Government Association (LGA) for all councillors. The aim of the pack was to provide an overview of the key legislation and policy issues, an understanding of what 'good' looks like and some key questions for members to consider.

Members noted the resource pack and:-

Resolved

That the pack be circulated to all members of the Council.

36. **Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 2nd September, 2024.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 6.56 pm.

Signed:

Date: