

Title of the report: 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.

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Report: Young People's Engagement and Children in Care Council	
1.1	Meeting with Locality Managers
	<p>On 7th of July a meet and greet session was held at the Transition Leaving Care Hub. We had four managers in attendance which included; Rita Homer (Head of Service for Family Safeguarding and Localities, Donna Lorde (Team Manager, Duty and Assessment West), Donna Green (Group Manager Help and Protection) and Zoe James (Team manager West Locality and Children With Disabilities).</p> <p>This prompted some really useful discussions and reflections. An introduction to what the family safeguarding model is, was provided to our young people and it was explained that we started working in this way in September 2020. Each manager gave a short introduction on what their roles were and how this directly relates to children, young people and their families.</p> <p>In short the differences to young people and their families experiencing help and support through the family safeguarding model was explored. Our young people like the idea of this family safeguarding model and felt that this is a far better way to support children and families. They felt this because the idea of having lots of professionals from different services supporting the family would be really beneficial and things may get done quicker. For example; having an adult social worker sitting in the same team as a children social worker and a mental health practitioner could mean that families get support quicker with better coordination which in turn would have a positive impact on vulnerable children. The work that families receive under this model can be long-term and short-term, some as little as 12 weeks of intervention from professionals.</p> <p>Highlights from this model were also discussed such as delays to families being either removed or avoided as part of this process.</p> <p>Following on from this we have planned to show some of our young people around different offices and workplaces where they can get to meet some of the teams within children's services. This will provide an opportunity for them to ask questions, find out more on what is on offer for children and families, see what life is like behind the doors of professionals in Walsall.</p> <p>Another great thing to come out of this was the following from our head of service Rita:</p> <p><i>Yesterday's meeting with the young people has provoked significant reflection. We were wondering if we can meet to look at a tangible plan around how we can look at some co-production in respect of service delivery/policy but with the young people being involved from the start as opposed to getting their views once a piece of work has been completed.</i></p> <p><i>Two key two areas are that they would like to discuss more with the children in care council is supporting and securing the views of children who are open under FS- (Family Safeguarding) how we can improve practice? Also Building our PLO (Public Law Outline) tool-kit in respect of teenagers whose parents are subject to pre proceedings.</i></p> <p>These will be considered as part of the care councils work plan Sept 2022-Sept 2023.</p>

1.2	Total Respect Training
	<p>To date we have delivered 7 sessions and continue to get positive feedback from the attendees. As previously discussed we were directed to source free council buildings to deliver the training which to date we have managed to do. We now have 6 care leavers trained to deliver this training with us and we continue to promote this to others for further recruitment. We are currently recruiting young people in care aged 14 and over to engage in a training opportunity in October to enable them to deliver Total Respect training.</p> <p>Here are some positives that come from this training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased confidence and self-esteem for our young adults • Increased awareness for attendees on Childrens Rights and how to promote them • Considerations for change in policy and process • Additional financial support for care leavers • Work experience which can be used for job applications • Sharing best practice ideas across multi-agencies • Time for reflection for staff and change in culture • Unlocking new skills and developing care leavers
1.3	Language that cares:
	<p>The steering group has now met on two occasions, the first one at the end of June virtually on Microsoft teams and the second took place face-to-face at the beginning of August. Both of these meetings have been productive and some good ideas are being generated which we will aim to take forward. Moving forward the group will meet monthly and will be chaired by the Group Manager for Quality and Practice. We are exploring how Mosaic (ICT system) can be adapt to reflect the learning from Language that Cares. We are looking at how this language can be addressed in induction and training, how we develop a continued communication campaign and how we can embed language that cares into practice.</p> <p>It has been agreed to create a 'Walsall Dictionary' which will show the acronyms and what they stand for which will hopefully provide an answer for anyone looking through their records. To provide some alternative suggestions to the professional jargon and to encourage the use of the friendlier more understandable plain English words. This can be done in partnership with our young people and draw on similar exercises completed by other Local Authorities.</p> <p>One member of the steering group Lorraine Thomas, Virtual Head has been the first manager in Walsall to change the language used on a job description which went to advert. Lorraine feels this is something which we could do within Walsall as a collective.</p> <p>Language that cares was a focus of discussion recently at Extended Senior Leadership team and it was positive to hear how across Children Services consideration is being given to how they can promote the Language that Cares agenda. Examples include consideration being given in</p>

	Commissioning and School transport to the wording of contracts.
1.4	Welcome Pack
	One of our managers within our Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service has works closely with print and design and practice in partnership in getting these packs printed. These are now going out to all social workers to start using with children right from the start when a child first comes into care. The children's champion and the care leaver ambassador will both help to support social care staff and embed this into their practice in order for us to have a consistent approach.
1.5	<p>Good news stories! Proud of our Care Leavers and our Transition Leaving Care Team</p> <p>We have a young adult who carried the queens baton for the Commonwealth Games, C has also secured her first tenancy, she is working full time and is a full time student in medical sciences, she came into care late in life but is making the most of the support on offer to her</p> <p>One young adult has been offered print & design apprenticeship at the council. C has been out of education for some time now – with support from his personal advisor and impact advisor he gained the confidence and belief that he has a lot of potential and can achieve his ambition of showing of his creative side</p> <p>One young man has signed his first tenancy, after being in staying put for the last year he felt he gained the skills he needed to live on his own. He has started work at Blakemore food services and also plans to go to university. He also took part in the young person's interview panel when recruiting for personal advisors for the Transition Leaving Care team.</p> <p>After a very long wait one young man has completed his first substantive interview, although he has no outcome from it he is very happy that the process has started.</p> <p>'A' is 20 he came to the UK in 2019 when he was 17 from Afghanistan. After a long process he has been granted 5 years leave to remain, this means that he has stability and can now plan for his future, he will be supported to look at his education/ employment opportunities and also long term accommodation.</p> <p>One young lady has struggled living with family and was not able to manage her own tenancy, she made her own arrangements by approaching YMCA and doing a self-referral and representing herself in an interview- she was offered a place with them and has settled in well. She has shown resilience and determination in securing accommodation in an area she wanted to live in.</p> <p>A young man has just completed his SIA licence on the 4th August and has a security job lined up working as security at the bull ring centre</p> <p>One of our young men when he was under 18 there was significant concerns about his mental health, consideration for mental health hospital was discussed, however, he has settled at Rivers and has embraced the support on offer, he has finished 6th form at Queen Mary's grammar school and will be starting Psychology degree at</p>

	Nottingham university in September
1.6	Children's home forum
	<p>The first forums for our young people in our children's homes will happen in September and will be led by our Care Leaver Ambassador Sophia Begum in partnership with staff from the children's home. The initial sessions will consider how they want the groups to function, names for the groups and ideas of what their priorities are.</p> <p>It is hoped that these groups will be able to work closely with the Children in Care council and Care Leavers forum.</p>
1.8	Dates for the diary
	<p><u>Council 4 Kids group dates:</u> 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.</p> <p><u>Care Leavers Group:</u> 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.</p> <p><u>Care leavers week:</u> Week commencing 24th October. A briefing paper has been completed to consider how elected members can be involved in the activity being offered.</p>

David Hughes
Children's Champion