

Corporate Parenting Board

Monday 2nd November 2020 at 6.00 p.m.

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

Held in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020; and conducted according to the Councils Standing Orders for Remote Meetings and those set out in the Council's Constitution.

Committee Members Present:

Councillor. T. Jukes (Chair)
Councillor. K. Ferguson
Councillor M. Statham
Councillor F. Mazhar

Officers Present

Colleen Male	Director, Children's Social Work
Elise Hopkins	Interim Director of Customer Engagement
Jivan Sembi	Head of Service (Children in Care, Provider and Care Leaving Services)
Zoe Morgan	Group Manager Corporate Parenting
Michelle Cummings	Children and Young Persons Champion
Zoe Morgan	Group Manager (Corporate Parenting)

Welcome

At this point in the meeting, the Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, and explaining the rules of procedure and legal context in which the meeting was being held. He also directed members of the public viewing the meeting to the papers, which could be found on the Council's Committee Management Information system (CMIS) webpage. Members confirmed that they could both see and hear the proceedings.

126/20

Introductions and Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor T. Wilson, Councillor L. Jeavons, Councillor M. Nazir, and Alison Jones.

Councillor F. Mazhar substituted on behalf of Councillor L. Jeavons.

127/20

Minutes

A copy of the minutes of the meetings held on the following dates were submitted:

- 7th January 2020
- 17th February 2020
- 10th August 2020

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7th January, 2020, 17th February, 2020, and 10th August, 2020, copies having previously been circulated to each Member of the Board, be approved and signed by the chairman as a correct record.

128/20

Young People Engagement

A report was submitted (see annexed). The Children and Young Persons Champion presented the report and highlighted the salient points.

Members were informed that WhatsApp had been used to engage the 16 years plus age group; this had been an effective tool in the engagement of young people. Microsoft Teams had also been utilised successfully.

The number of young people participating in the 'Children in Care Council' had increased. Technology had assisted in this, as young people could participate whilst in their own homes. In response to a question from a Member, Officers confirmed that this increase had been significant. A Children's champion engagement and participation group had been established.

Members acknowledged that it could be difficult to participate in virtual meetings, and asked how increased engagement of young people was sustained post Covid-19. The Children and Young Persons Champion stated that young people needed to be incentivised, listening to what they have to say, and the use of technology needed to be continued.

A Member questioned what was being done to future proof technology used. It was acknowledged that the pandemic had accelerated the use of this technology. It was also noted that a messaging platform and app was needed for younger children.

Young People had been contacted as part of a housing review, and their views had been sought to understand the support that young people had received in relation to housing.

A Member asked for clarification on 'MEL' research. The Board were informed that this was a group of representative young people who were asked questions and given tasks to provide an understanding of what life was like for young people in Walsall.

The Group Manager stated that the Authority was considering the support that could be put in place within colleges and universities for care leavers as part of the care leaver's covenant.

Resolved (by assent)

That the report be noted

129/20

Final Local Offer

The Group Manager spoke to the item. The 'Local Offer' was something that all authorities needed to have in place as part of the Children's and Social Work Act 2017. Walsall do have a Local Offer which is in the process of being updated. The Board were informed that there were many work streams that would feed into the 'Final Local Offer'. Council tax exemption was an example of this offer; this was available within and outside of the borough.

The 'Local Offer' would be ready to launch in the New Year.

Resolved (by assent)

That the verbal update be noted.

130/20

Corporate Parenting Final Pledges

The Group Manager spoke to the report to highlight the salient points (see annexed). The report set out the final plans for Walsall's Corporate Parenting Pledges, which informed Walsall Corporate Parenting Strategy. After consultation with young people, the word pledge had been replaced with the word 'promise'. Four main themes had formed the basis of the promise, and these were then broken down into different age ranges.

The Board were informed that a series of consultations had taken place both internally and externally. This had included workshops which had included around 32 young people of varying ages, surveys, and an event for practitioners.

It was clarified that the Board would approve the pledges; Members were assured that the content of the pledges reflected the feedback from children, and a commitment to young people from partner agencies. It was also noted that these pledges needed monitoring for outcomes and impact.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

131/20

Quarter 2 Performance Report

The Head of Service spoke to the report and highlighted the salient points (see annexed).

The number of children in care had started to reduce; this was largely due to proceedings concluding. There had been a significant improvement in the timelessness of health assessments; this was expected to continue improving.

There had been a significant drop in the number of care leavers in education or training; this was as a result of the pandemic. Officers were working with partners and the virtual school to develop strategies for young people to gain employment or education opportunities.

In response to questions from Members, the Board were advised that there had been an initial backlog in court proceedings and court availability. Members asked if there was confidence that resources/capacity would be available to case manage an influx of case management when court proceedings were concluded. The Director for Children's Social Work stated that once court proceedings had concluded the numbers of children in care would likely to be reduced, with a number of children expected to progress into permanence outside of the care of the local authority. Therefore, there would be no capacity issues for service. Work was ongoing with the courts and cases were being prioritised.

Resolved (Unanimously by assent)

That the report be noted.

132/20

Work Programme

The work programme was considered by the Board.

Officers were asked to provide feedback to the Board on issues that were raised as part of the Shadow Board. It was agreed that feedback would be provided to the Chair. It was suggested that a report on the number of young people in care that are NEET, to provide assurance to the Board.

Resolved

That the work programme be noted.

Termination of Meeting

The meeting terminated at 7.00 p.m.

The date of the next meeting would be Monday 11th January 2021.