

Corporate Parenting Board

Monday 4 July 2022 at 6.00 p.m.

Town Hall, Walsall Council House

Board Members Present:

Councillor T. Wilson (Chair)
Councillor. Jukes (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Hicken
Councillor I. Hussain
Councillor A. Hussain
Councillor Mazhar
Councillor. Nasreen
Councillor Worrall

Officers Present

Elise Hopkins	Director, Customer Engagement
David Hughes	Children and Young Persons Champion
Helena Kucharczyk	Head of Service
Jo Manning	Group Manager
Jivan Sembi	Head of Service (Children in Care, Provider and Care Leaving Services)
Lorraine Thompson	Head of Virtual School
Sally Rowe	Executive Director Children's Services

Young people representing the Children in Care Council.

Welcome

At this point in the meeting, the Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone present. He also noted that the meeting to the papers, which could be found on the Council's Committee Management Information system (CMIS) webpage.

1/22 **Introductions and Apologies**

Apologies were received on behalf of Alison Jones (Advisor to the Board).

2/22 **Substitutions**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

3/22 **Minutes**

A copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2022, were submitted.

(see annexed)

Resolved (Unanimous)

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2022, copies having previously been circulated to each Member of the Board, be approved and signed by the chairman as a correct record.

4/22 **Introduction to Corporate Parenting Board**

The Head of Service (Children in Care, Provider and Care Leaving Services) spoke to the presentation (annexed). It was stressed that Young People were central to the Board, and representatives were in attendance alongside the Children and Young Persons Champion.

The Chair set out the role of the Board and stressed the importance of the role of the corporate parent. Members were encouraged to attend the 'Respect' training, Officers were asked for further information on the contents of the 'Corporate induction' as it was considered important that newly Elected Members were informed of their responsibilities as a Corporate Parent. It was suggested that a letter should be sent to Elected Members to remind them of their responsibilities as a corporate parent. It was agreed that this information would be circulated and that Members would then determine if this was adequate in preparing Members for the role of corporate parent.

Resolved

- 1. That the Introduction to the Corporate Parenting board be noted.**
- 2. Further details on Respect training are circulated to the Board.**
- 3. The details of the Elected Member Corporate induction are circulated to the Board.**
- 4. A letter is sent to Elected Members to remind them of their responsibilities as a corporate parent.**

4/22 **Young People Engagement**

The Children's and Young Persons Champion presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed).

Four sessions of total respect training had been delivered by care leavers with good feedback received. Future sessions were planned and feedback from Young People described the positive outcomes from delivering the training sessions:

- Increased confidence and self-esteem for young adults.
- Increased awareness for attendees on children's 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.

An update was provided on 'language that cares', this continued to be promoted within Walsall – it had been presented at several meetings across Children's Services as well as at Walsall College to multi agency partners. It was agreed that this would be circulated to Board Members.

The Board were informed that the following issues were 'hot topics' for Care Leavers:-

- Mental Health and wellbeing.
- Living alone and isolation.
- Budgeting and cost of living, household bills, food shopping, travel as well as other increases.

A Young Person in attendance described her experience of living independently. The Childrens and Young People's Champion was asked how the service was engaging with Young People who were not part of the Children in Care Council (CiC). The Board were informed that this happened through a Foster Carers newsletter, the virtual school (PEPs) and it was noted that some Young People did not want to be involved in the CiC. A piece of work was underway to consider how to effectively reach a wider range of Young People to ensure representation.

It was agreed that once welcome packs (for children coming into care) which provided information in relation to process and rights in a child friendly way were finalised that they would be shared with Board Members.

A Member congratulated Young People on their achievements, and welcomed two new Young People in attendance at the Board. A discussion ensued on the 'setting up home' grant and it was stressed by Officers that Personal Assistants encouraged Young People to spend their grant wisely and to achieve the best value for their purchases. A Member questioned if the current allowance was

adequate and requested that a briefing paper detailing the costing implications of increasing the grant to £3000 be taken to a future meeting.

The Chair stated that Board Members would be happy to be guest speakers at the Children in Care Council.

Resolved

- 1. That the Young People Engagement Report be noted**
- 2. Respect training dates be circulated**
 - 1. A briefing note on the costing implications of increasing the 'setting up home' grant to £3000 be provided to a future meeting.**

5/22 Quarter 4 performance data

The Head of Service (Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement) presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). The Board were informed that backlogs in the courts had impacted on performance and the number of children on a full care order however this continued to decrease. Placement stability was described as stable with a challenge around placement availability and Walsall was performing better than comparators.

A Member asked for further clarity on visits which were not undertaken to timescale, the Group Manger stated that a small percentage would be expected to be completed late due to illness, and that the visit may take place 1 or 2 days late – however action plans were in place to improve this. It was also noted that delays in recording visits could cause an issue.

A Member noted that 98.9% of visits had involved the child's views, and paid credit to health partners for improving the number of children receiving up to date dental checks. Further information was sought on those Young People not in education, training or employment. Officers explained that this was improving, and an audit of care leavers had taken place with an action plan and recommendations produced to be presented to managers. It was noted that emotional health could often be a barrier to securing employment or education.

Clarification was provided that there was no backlog of EHCPs for Looked after Children.

A Young Person in attendance raised concern that it was not possible to apply for housing until shortly before a Young Person turned 18 years old. The Director stated that there should be a plan in place to prevent this situation but agreed to look at the case outside of the meeting to understand the situation and to try to prevent this in the future. The Chair suggested that the system as a whole could be considered by the Board. Further details on the allocation of housing to Young People was provided to the Board. A Member requested that a breakdown on the number of Young People in 'hostel' accommodation was provided as part of the next performance report.

Resolved

- **That the Quarter 4 performance report was noted.**
- **A breakdown on the number of Young People in 'hostel' accommodation was provided as part of the next performance report.**

6/22 Virtual School Annual Report 2020/2021

The Head of the Virtual School presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). Members were informed that the report outlined the activity of the Virtual School and reported on the 2020-21 educational outcomes of Walsall's children in care.

Members were informed that the 2021 GCSE results (for children in the care of Walsall Council for a year or more) were the best ever results reported for children in care. The number of young people gaining 5 or more 4-9 GCSE passes increased from 29% in 2020 to 38% in 2021. This was better than regional, national, and statistic neighbour reported outcomes.

It was noted that due to reporting requirements, attendance figures were not an accurate reflection of attendance during 2021, as many children in care were engaging with education at home.

Further detail on pupil premium plus was provided and Members were assured that consideration was given as to how this funding could be used to improve academic progress of children in care.

In response to a Member question, clarification was provided that A-level results were not provided within the annual report. A discussion ensued on fixed-term exclusions and Members were informed that the virtual school worked to avoid exclusions for Looked after Children however often the Virtual School were not aware of the events until the day the incidents happen.

The Head of the Virtual School informed the Board that work was done to support the completion and the quality of PEPs.

Resolved

That the Virtual School Annual Report 2020/2021 be noted.

The Chair asked Members to consider the priorities for the Board in the coming municipal year.

Resolved:

That Members considered the following areas to be of high priority:

- Increasing employability for young people not in education employment or training
- Young People Engagement
- Performance data
- Health passports
- Emotional Wellbeing of Young People
- Virtual School assurance report.
- Fostering and Adoption annual reports.
- Residential homes (Members to visit and feedback to the Board).
- The FLASH service.

A Young Person suggested that the storage room at the TLC was converted into a computer room. Officers confirmed that work was under way to consider how to best use space and the Young Person was thanked for his suggestion. The Chair thanked Young People for their attendance and positive contribution to the discussion at the meeting.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 7.37 p.m.

Signed

Date

