

**Education and Children's Services Overview and Agenda  
Scrutiny Committee** **Item No. 9**

**4 April 2017**

**Corporate Parenting Board**

**Ward(s)** All

**Portfolios:** Cllr R Burley- Education and Children's Services

**Executive Summary:**

This report provides an update on the activity and operation of the Corporate Parenting Board.

**Reason for scrutiny:**

For Scrutiny to be aware of the work of the Corporate Board, challenge its operation and provide support to Looked After Children as a Corporate Parent.

**Recommendations:**

**That:**

Scrutiny Panel notes and supports the contents of the report and the current activity of the Corporate Parenting Board.

**Resource and legal considerations:**

Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 imposes a duty on local authorities to "safeguard and promote the welfare of each child they look after".

The current Looked After Children placement budget is circa £14.5m with a further investment of circa £2.5m agreed as part of the Councils 2017/18 budget to support identified cost pressures associated with LAC placements. The Council's Medium Term Financial Outlook also includes saving proposals associated with reducing these costs through increasing in-borough placement provision and reducing its use of Out of Borough placements provision where appropriate and safe to do so.

Children's Social Care staffing resource associated with Looked after Children and Transition Leaving Care is currently circa £2.7m and includes Social workers and Personal Advisers.

**Citizen impact:**

The Council has clear statutory responsibilities for Looked After Children in its role as Corporate Parent. The Council and its partners seek to improve the life chances of all vulnerable young people, through an integrated approach and ensure that children and young people are safe, achieve good educational outcomes and make a positive contribution to society as good and active citizens.

**Environmental impact:**

None directly as a result of this report.

**Performance management:**

The Corporate Parenting Board receives quarterly performance management information and updates on the progress of Looked after Children and Care Leavers and provides appropriate challenge.

**Equality Implications:**


Looked After Children come from all sections of the community and have a full diversity of need. The Corporate Parenting Board has a responsibility to ensure these diverse needs are met.

**Consultation:**

Looked After Children and Care Leavers are central to the work of the Corporate Parenting Board and there is effective representation and engagement with these groups via the Board. Consultation takes place through the Council for Kids and Respect Group and four members of the Group attend the Corporate Parenting Board. A care leaver is the vice-chair of the Board.

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## 1 What is corporate parenting?

Every good parent desires the best outcomes for their child. For children in care, it is the local authority elected members, senior officers and partners who are responsible for ensuring a standard of care, support and outcomes for looked after children and care leavers that would be good enough for children in their own families.

A corporate parent's concern should be that every looked after child is supported to achieve the best outcomes in every aspect of their lives including their physical and emotional health, education, general welfare and their aspirations and preparations as they enter adulthood. This is at the heart of corporate parenting.

Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 imposes a duty on local authorities to "safeguard and promote the welfare of each child they look after".

## **2 Who is a corporate parent?**

In Walsall, whilst we recognise that the corporate parenting responsibility rests with **all** councillors, council officers and local agencies. We also recognised it as a collective and core responsibility for all local authority staff.

There are generally three different levels of responsibility:

- Universal: For all Local Authority members, staff and local partners including general awareness of governance arrangements, issues facing Looked After Children and how they can help and support Looked After Children.
- Targeted: for all councillors who visit children's homes or sit on the Corporate Parenting Board or for example visit children's homes.
- Specialist: where corporate parenting is a core function of someone's role and responsibilities.

## **3 The role and function of corporate parenting board**

The Corporate Parenting Board meets every six weeks. Its main function is to ensure that Walsall Council, elected members, Council officers and partner agencies take responsibility for working together to provide the best possible opportunities and outcomes to our looked after children, young people and care leavers and hold each other to account for discharging this function well.

The Board aims to do this by:

- Ensure that Walsall Council and partner agencies have a joint commitment to corporate parenting in order to achieve continuing improvements in outcomes for our children and young people in care and care leavers.
- Develop, implement, oversee and review the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan to ensure that we listen to the views of our children and young people and act on them.
- Oversee and monitor outcomes for looked after children and young people and care leavers in conjunction with the Performance and Scrutiny panel to ensure that we are doing the right thing and be challenged if we are not.
- Ensure looked after children and young people and care leavers have a real voice and participate in changes to policy and service development and that their engagement is promoted through their direct involvement with the Corporate Parenting Board and Walsall's Children and Young People's Partnership Board arrangements.
- Ensure that the achievements of our looked after children and young people, young carers and carers are recognised and celebrated.
- Advising on and monitoring:
  - Safeguarding and protection of Looked After Children and Care Leavers, including in relation to high profile activities such as CSE and missing episodes.

- Plans, strategies or policies for looked after children and young people and care leavers, so that their impact is realised and that the priorities are set out in the Corporate Parenting Strategy.
  - The commissioning of services to Looked After Children and care leavers including, but not exclusively, placements, health services, employment opportunities, leisure and culture services, services to young people in care at risk of or involved in offending behaviour and young parents who are or have been in care.
  - Key performance indicators, educational attainment, and other associated activities in relation to achievements of looked after children and care leavers.
  - Preventative activity for children and young people on the edge of care.
- Receive regular reports and challenge on the provision of work experience opportunities, housing and training services for care leavers.

#### **4 Current chair arrangements**

Councillor Tina Jukes is the current Chair of the Board; she took over this role from Councillor Rose Martin in September 2016. Marie Hudson is the Co-Chair (Young Person Representative) alongside Councillor Jukes.

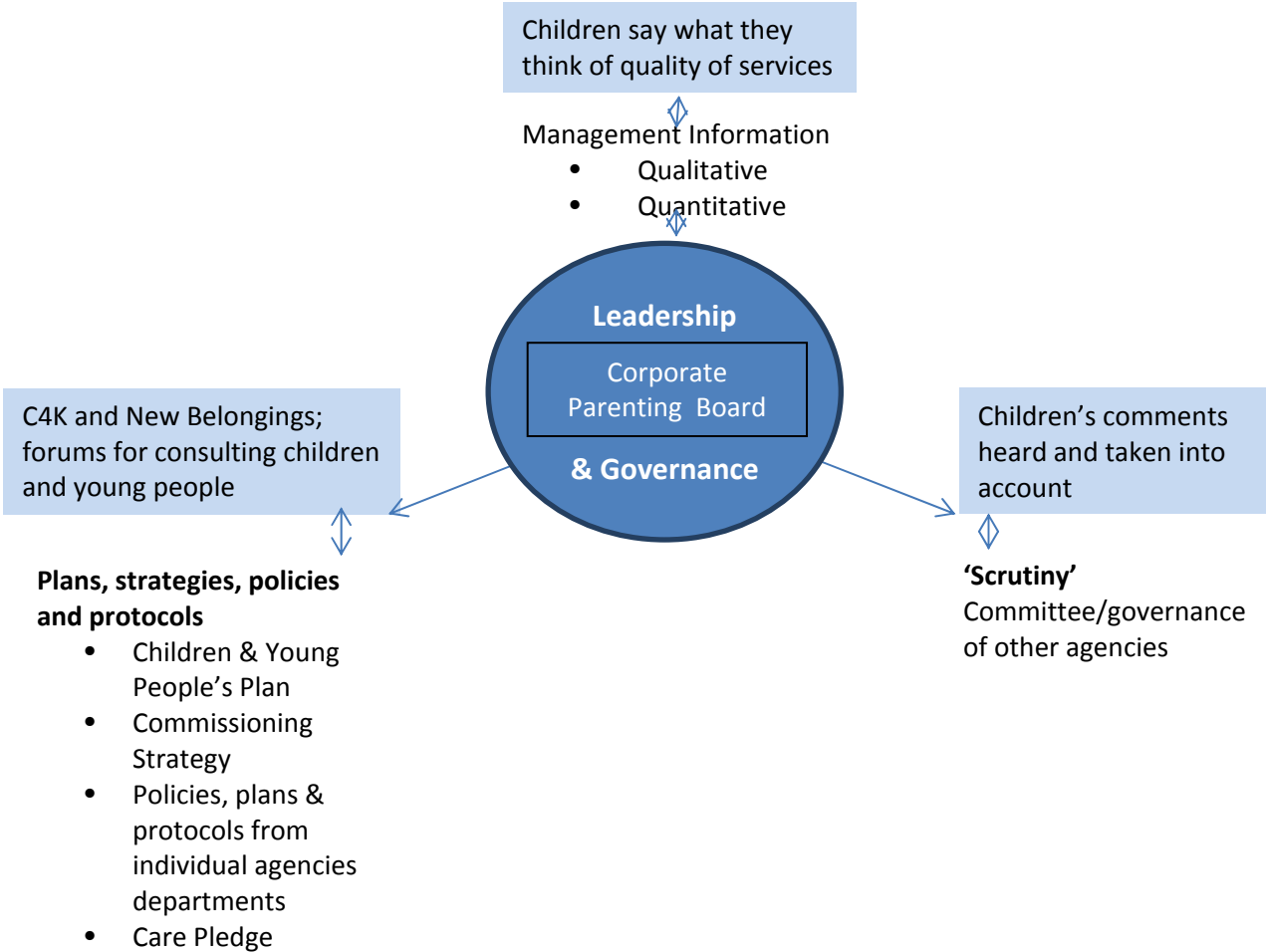
#### **5 Corporate Parenting Board membership**

The current membership of the Board is as follows:

Councillor T Jukes	–	Chair
Marie Hudson	-	Co-Chair - Young Person Representative
Michael Edwards	-	Young Person
Aamaar Ali	-	Young Person
David Haley	-	Executive Director – Children’s Services
Debbie Carter	-	Assistant Director – Children’s Services
Councillor R Burley	-	Portfolio Holder
Councillor L Hazel	-	Councillor
Councillor R Martin	-	Councillor
Councillor I Shires	-	Councillor
Carol Boughton	-	Head of Service Safeguarding
Donessa Gray	-	Group Manager LAC / TLC
Debbie Silvester	-	Group Manager IRO
Lisa Preston	-	Group Manager Provider Services
Mike Morris	-	Principal IRO
Vacant post	-	Team Manager Transition and Leaving Care
Lorraine Thompson	-	Manager - Virtual School
Jimmy Hayward	-	14 – 16 Manager Walsall College
Kevin Newton	-	Chair of Walsall Foster Carers Association
Mandy Viggers	-	Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children Walsall CCG
Diane Rhoden	-	Corporate Senior Nurse – Quality and Safeguarding
Paul Wicker	-	Leisure Services
Fiona Wilson	-	Targeted Youth Support
Nick Perks	-	Performance Manager
Jackie Alexander	-	CAMHS
Marlene Vernon	-	NHS

## The aim of the Corporate Parenting Board:

The Board sets out to ensure that the Council, Members, services and partner agencies take responsibility for working together to provide the best possible opportunities to children and young people who are in care and care leavers and hold each other to account for making this happen. It acts as the visible organisational champion for children and young people in and leaving care and exists to ensure the mobilisation of resources and the promotion of their rights, entitlements and aspirations. In discharging its responsibilities it seeks to make the optimum use of the resources available within the Local Authority and across partner agencies to get the best chance of success for children in care and to support care leavers to positively transition to adulthood and independence.



## 6 How young people are engaged

Four care leavers currently attend Corporate Parenting Board. Marie Hudson co-chairs the meetings alongside Councillor Jukes and also leads an activity to engage all attendees at the start of each meeting. There are strong engagement and feedback links to the Council for Kids and Respect Group. The Corporate Parenting Board deliver the Children and Young People's pledges and feedback actions at each meeting. At least one looked after child is part of each work stream working group.

## **7 Progress over the past year**

In the last twelve months the Board has:

- Reviewed, updated and ratified our Pledge to Looked After Children and Young People and Care Leavers. Children and young people were consulted as part of this process and their views shaped the final Pledges which were ratified and accepted in January 2017.
- Secured agreement for Care Leavers up to the age of 25 years to be exempt from paying Council Tax.
- Reviewed and updated the Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2017 – 2020
- Received and updated the Corporate Parenting Board work streams and associated plans.
- The majority of Board members have completed the RESPECT training delivered by care leavers.
- Board members have undertaken training as to their role and responsibilities in relation to Corporate Parenting.
- Merged the Council 4 Kids and Respect Group.
- Members have been appointed to undertake visits to each of the Borough's children's homes and provide feedback to managers and the Scrutiny Board about children's views and experiences.
- Established a Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) Action Group which has implemented individual support plans for all young people who NEET.
- Developed the IMPACT programme to have a themed focus for Care Leavers with a dedicated, full time worker for care leavers.
- Delivered a robust attendance monitoring process to ensure that looked after children do not miss education.
- Through continued targeted use of Pupil Premium provided focussed support to looked after children that are working below their expected levels of attainment or requested additional support with their learning.
- We have commissioned a Foster Carers and Looked After Children's Support Hub (FLASH), a service specifically designed to meet the emotional health and well being needs of looked after children who would not otherwise meet the criteria for CAMHS. The service is available for children and young people up to the age of 18 years. The FLASH team delivers the service through direct intervention with the child (where indicated) and direct intervention with the foster carers, residential carers, guardians, or adoptive parents.
- As of 1 September 2016, 62% of looked after child within the looked after service had a passport. The remaining 38% had an application underway.
- The transition and leaving care service has been reviewed.

## **8 Our Pledge to Looked After Children and Young People and Care leavers**

On 31 January 2017 the refreshed Looked After Children and Young People and Care Leavers Pledges were presented to the Corporate Parenting Board and a commitment was made by the Board to ensure the Pledges are realised.

The Board confirmed that it would support looked after children and young people to achieve the best that they can through being ambitious in meeting the following promises:

## **8.1 Our Pledge to all Looked after Children**

### **Your Education**

- We will do everything we can to make sure you have the very best education and training possible.
- You will be supported in taking up opportunities for further education and apprenticeships.

### **Your Health**

- We will do everything we can to make sure that your health is regularly checked and your health needs are addressed.
- We will support you to maintain and improve your health and wellbeing.

### **A Good and Safe Place to Live**

- We will do all that we can to make sure you have a home where you feel safe, happy and healthy and where you feel well cared for and supported. We will make sure your carers have access to the support they need to make this happen for you.

### **Things to do**

- We will make sure you have the opportunity to take part in sporting activities, youth clubs and other social activities without facing barriers or obstacles.
- Your passport application will be treated as a priority especially where you live in a long term placement.

### **Your Voice... Your Influence**

- We will make sure you have chances to share your views, wishes and feelings. We promise to listen to you and tell you how your views and feelings are taken into account in making plans.
- We will make sure you know what your rights are on a regular basis and information will be shared with you in a child friendly manner.
- Contact with people who are important to you will be actively promoted and arrangements will clearly take into account your wishes and feelings.
- We will support the Respect group to make sure that looked after children in Walsall have their voices heard. Members of the Corporate Parenting Board will meet with children and young people at least four times a year.

## **8.2 Our pledge to Care Leavers**

In keeping with the vision outlined in 'Keep on Caring' (July 2016) Walsall Council and its partners are committed to improving the transition into adulthood for care leavers through ensuring:

- All young people leaving care are better prepared and supported to live independently.
- Have improved access to education, employment and training.
- Experience stability in their lives, and feel safe and secure.

- Have improved access to health support.
- Achieve financial stability.

The Corporate Parenting Board also confirmed that it would be ambitious in supporting care leavers to achieve the best that they can through the active promotion of the following promises:

- Don't judge Care leavers on the past believe in their future
- Go to medical appointments with care leavers if they are scared to go alone
- Listen to care leavers and hear what they say
- Help care leavers learn about budgeting and what bills to pay
- Help care leavers with their career plans
- Respect care leavers as individuals
- Spend some time with care leavers away from the office
- Help care leavers find and keep a stable place to live

## **9 Engagement with C4K and New Belongings**

The Board has recognised the need to engage and consult more closely with our Children and Young People. It has been acknowledged that the Board meeting is not the best setting for gathering their views. Therefore, in addition to asking for quarterly feedback, the Board has devised a rota for Corporate Parenting Board members to meet with the children and young people who attend the New Belongings group and C4K on a monthly basis commencing in April 2017.

## **10 Proposed work plan for year**

The Board will continue to receive regular performance reports about the progress of Looked After Children and Care Leavers on a quarterly basis including information about educational achievement, engagement in employment and training, health needs and housing needs. At each Board meeting there will be feedback on the progress of work stream action plans and a report back from young people about Board members engagement with C4Kids and New Belongings. In addition there will be a series of 'spotlight' reports over the year for the following areas.

April	Progress of children placed out of Borough and update on Placement stability
June	Review of Transition and Leaving Care and proposed action plan
July	Update on progress of LAC reduction plan
September	Update on Fostering recruitment and Mocking Bird model
October	LAC Offending / Health and Well being
December	Education and Participation

## **11 The Corporate Parenting Board work streams are:**

Money Home Jobs lead - Elise Hopkins

Lifestyle and Leisure – Paul Wicker Principal Sport and Active Recreation Officer,  
Walsall Sport and Leisure

Good Health and Wellbeing – Mandy Viggers - Designated Nurse for Safeguarding  
Children and Children Looked After

Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group

Education, training and employment lead – Lorraine Thompson