



**Walsall Council**

**Walsall Healthcare** **NHS**  
NHS Trust



Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group

# **Corporate Parenting Strategy**

## **2017-2020**

**Improving Outcomes for our Looked After Children and  
Care Leavers**



**Walsall Children: 'Safe, Happy and Learning Well'**

## Foreword

Welcome to Walsall's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2017-2020.

Looked after children and care leavers are among the most vulnerable in our society. Each of the children and young people we support as corporate parents will have experienced some difficulty within their lives and sadly the circumstances and experiences of children in care and care leavers can often disadvantage them in comparison to their peers.

We believe that being a Corporate Parent is one of the most important responsibilities held by elected members, partner agencies and individual staff across the partnership. We must approach this parenting role with passion and commitment and all work collectively to improve outcomes for our looked after children and care leavers. We have high aspirations for our children and young people and will do our utmost to continue to build our capacity to afford them the support and stability necessary to be confident, ambitious and to help them go on to lead fruitful adult lives.

This corporate parenting strategy provides the aspirations that we hold for our looked after children and care leavers, our promises to them for the next three years and how we will achieve this.

We realise the importance of involving children and young people in helping us understand what we need to do to together to help them achieve their very best. With this in mind we are committed to making sure that the strength of this strategy lies in our partnership with children and young people in the continued and active engagement of both the Council 4 Kids and the New Belongings groups, so that we can monitor progress against delivery on our promises together.

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## 1. What is Corporate Parenting?

Good parents want the best for their children. Local authority elected members and senior officers are responsible for taking on this role for looked after children and care leavers, ensuring a standard of care and support which includes all aspects of a child's wellbeing including their health, education, general welfare and their aspirations as they enter adulthood. This is known as corporate parenting and current legislation (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 Director of Children's Services and Lead Members have this as a core function, but how individuals are involved may depend on their role, and Corporate Parenting is recognised as a collective and a core responsibility for all staff working with looked after children and young people and care leavers. There are generally three different levels of responsibility:

1. Universal: for example, a general awareness of governance arrangements and the issues facing looked after children;
2. Targeted: for example, Councillors visiting children's homes;
3. Specialist: where corporate parenting is at the heart of someone's role, for example a Social Worker or Head of Virtual School, Designated and Named Doctors and Nurses for Looked after children.

Whilst there may not be the opportunity for all corporate parents to develop their own individual relationships with children and young people, there is an emphasis upon the 'creation of the conditions' where the needs of individual children and young people are understood and met through the provision of the right services at the right time (for example learning opportunities, housing, financial advice, leisure services). Services should 'at the ready' to 'give their best' to ensure the children and young people can 'do their best' and be an active part of the life-space of Looked after Children and Care Leavers as individuals and as a group (*Figure 1*).



## 2. Corporate Parenting Board

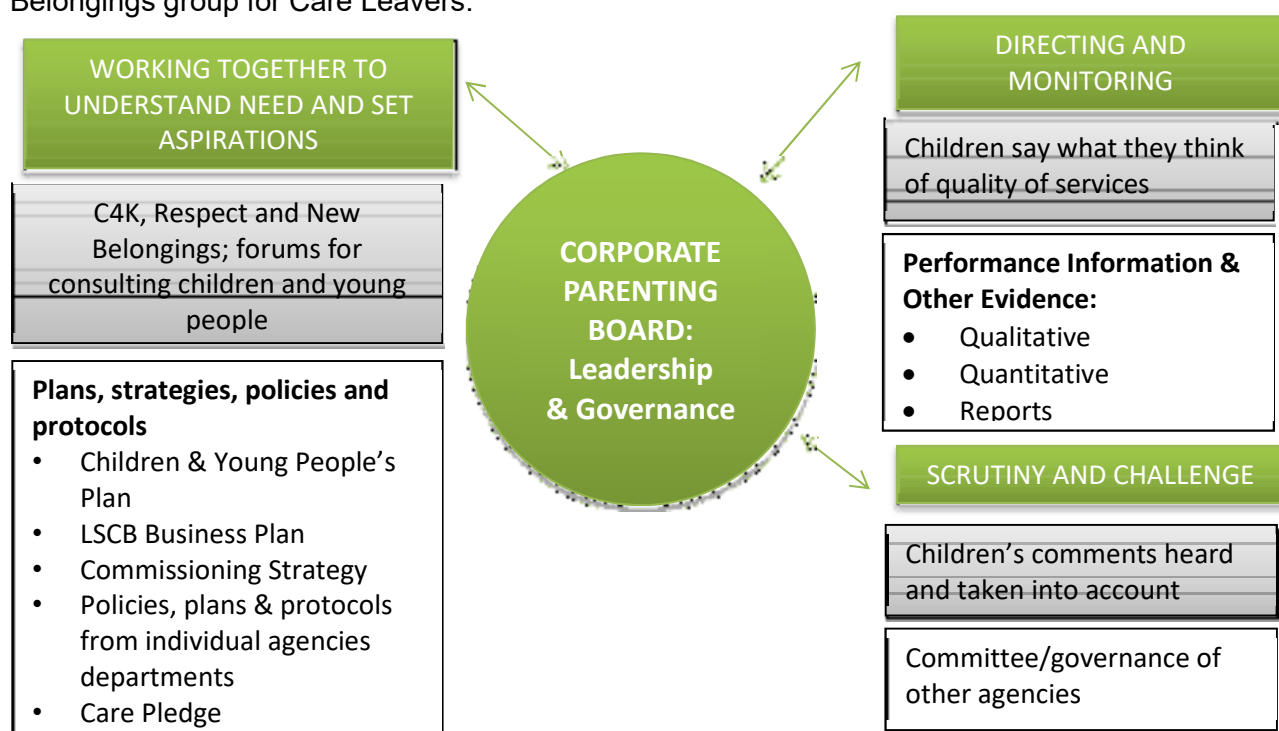
Walsall's multi-agency Corporate Parenting Board ensures:

- everyone works together to fulfil the corporate parenting role and to hold each other to account for making this happen;
- it acts as the visible organisational champion for looked after children and young people and care leavers, promoting their rights, entitlements and aspirations;
- the mobilisation and optimum use of resources available to get the best chance of success for children in care and to support care leavers to positively transition to adulthood and independence.

It does this by:

- developing, implementing, overseeing and reviewing the Corporate Parenting Strategy and action plans to ensure that the whole Council and partner agencies have a joint commitment to corporate parenting, and outcomes fulfil the Council's responsibilities towards children and young people in care and care leavers;
- monitoring the outcomes for looked after children and young people and care leavers in conjunction with the Council's Scrutiny arrangements and other partnerships, to ensure their achievements are celebrated;
- co-production with young people and their carers in policy and service development, and determining appropriate consultation;
- advising on other plans, strategies or policies; commissioning of services; and associated activities for children on the edge of care, looked after children and care leavers.

Our model for Corporate Parenting (figure 2) illustrates how this is achieved in conjunction with Scrutiny and children's forums such as The Council 4 Kids/Respect Group and the New Belongings group for Care Leavers.



### 3. Our Ambition

We believe that children are usually best brought up within their own birth families however there are lots of reasons why some children need to live away from home. A child may become looked after by the Local Authority due to the ill health of a parent, a family crisis, the child's behaviour or because the child may be at risk if they remain living at home.

We know that all too often the life chances of looked after children and care leavers are inhibited through their circumstances and we are clear that we will not accept this for our looked after children and care leavers. Our ambition is to do all that we can to ensure that their wellbeing and growth is of the highest priority and that they will have every opportunity to achieve the very best that they can in all aspects of their development.

We want our children to be happy and healthy both physically and emotionally and to be safe and protected from harm and exploitation. We want to make sure they live in permanent stable homes where they feel safe and happy and where they feel loved, valued, well cared for and supported throughout childhood and into adult life. We want them to enjoy learning and have the best possible learning opportunities. This includes having a positive and supported transition into adulthood; being able to access fulfilling jobs and higher education, having the benefit of good housing, being financially secure, enjoying positive relationships and in time themselves being good parents to their own children.

Above all we want our children to be confident and responsible citizens; being actively involved in planning and decision making, being ambitious and successful in realising the goals and ambitions they set for themselves.

Through this strategy we aim to work collectively to realise our ambition and the achievement of our promises to looked after children and care leavers and help them to build futures through which they continue to **be safe, happy and learning well**.

### 4. Review of 2014 to 2016

Our last strategy set out our pledge to looked after children and young people and care leavers under six themes. As well as in-year performance monitoring, a review of progress against the Corporate Parenting strategy (2014-2017) in September 2016 included consultation with the Respect and New Belongings groups and work stream lead officers.

In January 2017, 328 looked after children aged 8 to 17 were invited to take part in a survey seeking their views on a number of issues including the extent to which they believed the looked after children and care leaver pledges were being delivered. There were 67 written returns, and 11 telephone survey returns with young people aged over 18.

The progress review and analysis of the survey illustrated that there had been many successes against delivery of the pledges, which are described in the next section. However there is still more work to do. Children and young people were clear that they:

- wanted contact with people significant to them to be better
- need us to think differently about the way in which they can have their say
- want a consistent social worker who they can get to know

- need more understanding of, and more of a say about their care plan
- need more information about advocacy
- wanted to enjoy and feel confident in school
- want to have a good friendship network
- want to feel liked and loved
- want to have access to leisure options
- want information about their health and flexible access to health services
- need support to move to adulthood at the 'right time for them'.

## **Key Data**

Compared to three years ago there are more looked after children in Walsall. There were 634 looked after children and young people at the end of December 2016, and 210 care leavers aged 18-25. Reducing the number of looked after children safely is a key priority for the Council.

Positively, there has been an improvement in looked after children attending good or outstanding schools, reduced offending, better short term placement stability and more children are screened via the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. Less positively, slightly more children are placed out of borough, a higher proportion of care leavers are not in suitable accommodation, or in education employment or training. Further information about outcomes for looked after children and care leavers are provided in each of the workstream sections.

Learning from the views of and feedback from our young people and our corporate parenting partners, research as well as data, have all been used to help shape this strategy and will also be used going forward to help the development, monitoring and review of the resulting plans to ensure we achieve our goals.

A refresh of the pledges was undertaken by the Respect and New Belongings groups and endorsed by Corporate Parenting Board in January 2017.

## 5. Our Pledge to Looked after Children and Care Leavers

### OUR PLEDGE TO LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

#### Your Education

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

#### Your Health

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

#### A Good and Safe Place to Live

5. 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

6. We will make sure you have the opportunity to take part in sporting activities, youth clubs and other social activities without facing obstacles.
7. Your passport application will be treated as a priority.

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

8. 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.
9. 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.
10. Contact with people who are important to you will be actively promoted and arrangements will clearly take into account your wishes and feelings.
11. 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.

### OUR PLEDGE TO CARE LEAVERS

In keeping with the vision outlined in 'Keep on Caring' (July 2016) we will improve the transition into adulthood so that all young people leaving care are better prepared and supported to live independently.

12. We will improve access to education, employment and training and help you with your career plans
13. We will help you to experience stability in your lives, and feel safe and secure, including help to find and keep a stable place to live
14. We will provide improved access to health support, and go to medical appointments with you if you are worried to go alone
15. We will help you learn about budgeting and what bills to pay to help achievement of financial stability.
16. We will respect you as individuals, not judge you on the past, and we will believe in your future
17. We will listen to you, hear what you say and spend some time with you away from the office

## 6. Our strategy for delivering our pledges

This is the promise we make to each child in our care and each of our care leavers regardless of their age, ability, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or whether they live within or outside of the Walsall boundary. Six Corporate Parenting Board work streams will help us to deliver these promises and each theme sets out our aspiration, our pledge, what we know nationally and locally, what we have achieved in the previous period, and what we need to do next.

1. Respect and influence
2. Home
3. Education, training and employment
4. Good health and wellbeing
5. Lifestyle and leisure
6. Journeying to adulthood

### 1. Respect and Influence

Everyone involved with our children and young people will treat them with respect, listening to their views and explaining clearly why some things cannot happen if that is the case. Children and young people will have the opportunity to share their views, wishes and feelings and be involved in and understand the decisions that are made about their lives. We will make every effort to talk, and listen to children and young people in a way they understand, no matter their ability, language or communication needs. Children and young people will know their rights and how to access the information, support and advice that they need when they need it. They will also know how to complain.

#### **Our Pledge to Children and Young People in our Care and Care Leavers says**

- 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.
- Listen to care leavers and hear what they say
- 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.

#### **What we know about looked after children's experience nationally<sup>1</sup>:**

- Nearly half said they often felt good about the future: this relied on good relationships, and stability.
- Just over 50% of children did not understand why they came into care.
- Only 46% knew how to get an advocate.

#### **What we know locally:**

- In Walsall we have the benefit of two groups which enable engagement and participation with our children and young people: The Respect Group for looked after young people aged 11 -18 years which currently has ten members and which incorporates Council for

<sup>1</sup> National references from research and [Children in Care and Care Leavers Survey 2015](#)



Kids – C4K; and the New Belongings Group for Care Leavers who are 18 plus and has six members. Representatives from New Belongings play an active part in the Corporate Parenting Board. It is a challenge to engage children and young people in becoming active members of Respect group/C4K and New Belongings.

- 60% of Children and young people often did not know what an advocate was and 72% did not know how to get in touch with an advocate. (LAC survey 2017).
- 59% of children and young people feel that they have a say about what their care plan is. (LAC survey 2017).

### What did our children and young people tell us:

"I hate meetings"

"Meetings like reviews go on for a long time and can go on to other siblings while you're there"

"I go to all my reviews and I have my say"

### What we have done:

- Since 2014, six total respect courses have been delivered to 75 participants and further courses are currently being scheduled.
- The IRO's now have an introductory card which is given to the child or young person at their first looked after statutory review.
- The pathway plan for young people who are over 18 has been changed following feedback from the New Belongings Group.
- 90.1% of children and young people had their reviews held on time in 15/16.
- The dispute resolution process has been embedded by the Independent reviewing officers which helps to ensure the appropriate progression of children's care plans.
- Social Workers have had the opportunity to develop their skills in doing one to one work with children and they have been given direct work bags to help with this.
- A caseload pledge means that Social Workers will have responsibility for no more than 15 children and young people which means that they will have more time to listen to children and young people and be clear about their wishes and feelings and support them to influence plans and decisions.
- We have appointed Members to undertake visits to each of the borough's children's homes and the scrutiny about children's views and experiences, providing feedback to managers.

### What we are going to do next:

- We will develop child friendly ways of involving children and young people and capturing and understanding their views and experiences.
- We will routinely use the views of children and young people to inform their care plans, decisions and service development.
- We will routinely involve children and young people in the recruitment and selection of staff who have a core responsibility for looked after children and care leavers across the partnership.
- Children and young people will have easy access to information about rights, entitlements and advocacy services.
- Work with children and young people to refresh our approach to participation and co-production.

## How we will know we have succeeded:

- The number of children and young people who contribute to their review will increase.
- There will be clear evidence of how children's views have shaped decision making in their own lives as well as in service development.
- New appointees will meet children as part of the recruitment and selection process
- Children and young people will tell us they are clear about why they came into care, their rights and entitlements.
- Increase in children and young people who have been offered, and taken up advocacy support.
- Increase in active members of Respect Group and New Belongings.

## 2. Home - a good, safe and stable place to live

Children, young people and care leavers live in good, safe homes where they feel cared for, safe and supported and can stay for as long as they need to. They receive information about their placement in advance and will be able to visit and be given a choice prior to moving in where possible. They are listened to if they have concerns about their placement at any time. Children and young people will live as near to family, friends and their school as possible and their placement will feel like home. We will support care leavers to 'stay put' if that is what they and their foster carer want and we will provide 'staying close' opportunities for those children living in children's homes.

### Our Pledge to children, young people and care leavers says

- Help care leavers find and keep a stable 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.

## What we know about looked after children's experience nationally:

- 81% thought they were living in the right place for them and could say why.
- Moves had been right for just over half – they had been managed well, with children able to take important possessions with them.
- 10% of children and young people said that where they lived was not right for them because: they did not feel they were listened to; were not helped; lack freedom; lack trust; do not get on with carers; feel they do not belong; were not living with their birth family; lack of contact with birth family; were located too far away from family, friends, school or college; or live in an isolating environment.

## What we know locally:

- 73% of looked after children are placed with foster carers; 9% placed with parents; and 9% in residential accommodation such as a secure unit, children's home, or other residential setting (Dec 2016).
- 6% of looked after children had three or more placements in the year (Dec 16) compared to 11% nationally.
- 61.5% of children who have been looked after for over two and a half years, have been in the same placement for two years (Dec 16) which is below the national of 67%.
- The percentage of children placed out of the borough and more than 20 miles from where they used to live is 16.3%, compared to 14.6% nationally.

- 21.7% of children ceasing to be looked after do so because they are adopted, which is higher than the national average of 16%.

### What did our children and young people tell us?

"I am so very happy where I am because they are loving"

"We need families to encourage children to join in the events and get involved as a child of their own to make them feel part of the family"

"My family look after me and I have a new club"

### What have we done:

- Our revised Staying Put Policy was launched in 2014/15 in consultation with young people and foster carers. In 15/16 23 young people 'stayed put'.
- Our fostering recruitment campaign continues and there has been active marketing for carers to look after sibling groups and carers and teenagers resulting in an increase in the number of new foster carers able to look after siblings.

### What do we need to do next:

- Develop 'staying close' arrangements between partners and in consultation with young people.
- Increase the range and quality of 'local' placement options of all kinds for looked after children and care leavers including those with more complex needs.
- Develop the skills of all carers so they can provide a home where children and young people feel safe, happy and 'loved' and where they do not have to move unless it is an agreed part of their plan.
- Help all looked after children to achieve a permanent home in a timely way.

### How we will know we have succeeded:

- There will be a clear 'staying close' offer for all young people living within a children's home.
- Fewer children and young people live more than 20 miles from their home address.
- More children and young people will remain living with the same carers until they reach adulthood.
- There will be an increase in good quality local accommodation options for care leavers.
- Children and young people will tell us that they feel safe, happy cared for and loved.
- More children cease to be looked after due to positive outcomes.

## 3. Education, training and employment:

Children and young people receive a planned and supportive education from early years through to higher education and into work. They are supported to fulfil their educational ambitions and have high aspiration for their future. They will have access to individualised careers advice and planning and mentoring, work experience and apprenticeship opportunities.

### Our pledge to children, young people and care leavers says:

- 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.
- Help care leavers with their career plans

### What we know about looked after children's experience nationally:

- Lots of children and young people are happy about their education and happy with their grades.
- Looked after children generally achieve lower attainment than their peers.

### What we know locally:

- 79% of Walsall looked after children attend a good or outstanding school (Feb 2017), a 4% increase since September 2016.
- No looked after children have been permanent excluded since 2014.
- 3% of looked after children have received a fixed term exclusion (Feb 2017). This has increased by 2% since September 2016.
- 35% of looked after children achieved a good GCSE in both English and Maths.
- There has been a 12% reduction in persistent absentees since September 2016, to currently 10% (Feb 2017).
- 59.4% of care leavers aged 19-21 are not in suitable education, employment or training. (Dec 2016) and is above the national average.

### What did our children and young people say:

"I like having extra support in class as things get explained to me"

"My designated teacher has helped me to realise that I need to keep working towards my goals and don't let anything put me off"

"Personal education and review meetings need to be less formal"

### What have we done:

- Worked closely with all our schools to ensure first day provision is put in place for any looked after children who receive fixed term exclusion.
- Enabled all year 11 students to have access to a tutor to support their GCSEs.
- Ensured that when a looked after child moves school they are placed in a good or outstanding school if it is the best school to meet their holistic needs.
- Worked in partnership with Early Years to produce an Early Years Self-assessment Tool for schools and early year's settings to enable them to bench mark their practice for looked after children.
- Introduced a robust attendance monitoring process in place to ensure that looked after children do not miss education.
- Through targeted use of Pupil Premium provided focussed support to looked after children working just below their expected levels of attainment or requested additional support with their learning.
- Set up the NAG group which has supported the development of individual support plans with all young people who are not in Education, employment and training.
- Developed the IMPACT programme to have a themed focus for Care Leavers.

### What do we need to do next:

- By working closely with School Improvement partners and designated teachers, increase support and challenge to schools to ensure that looked after children are making expected or better progress and the gap between them and their peers is narrowing.

- Support all schools in Walsall to ensure they have a well trained and effective designated teacher.
- Increase the proportion of looked after children attending good or outstanding schools.
- Improve and streamline the PEP Process by introducing the e-PEP.
- Ensure that the Pupil Premium is being used effectively to raise attainment and aspirations of looked after children.
- Increase our participation with looked after young people post 16 to ensure they are in appropriate provision and that they are supported as they move towards adulthood.
- Support and challenge schools to ensure that Respect Group/C4K can evidence that they regularly address the educational experiences raised by looked after children and is able to respond effectively to such issues.
- Develop a collaborative mentoring and apprenticeship scheme within the Local Authority and across the partnership.

#### How we will know we have succeeded:

- Attainment at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 will increase and the attainment gap between looked after children and their peers will have narrowed.
- Pupil premium will have been spent on appropriate interventions designed to narrow the attainment gap.
- The number of young people going into training, apprenticeships, further and higher education will increase.

## 4. Good Health and Wellbeing

The health needs of children and young people are assessed and planned for. This includes supporting the development of identity and self-esteem and good emotional well-being. Children are supported to access all the health services they require and are given expert advice and guidance. They are well and happy and choose healthy, active and positive lifestyles.

### Our pledge to children, young people and care leavers says:

- As you grow up you will be asked for your opinion on your health needs and will be involved in decision making about 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.
- We will go to medical appointments with you if you are worried to go alone

#### What we know about looked after children's experience nationally:

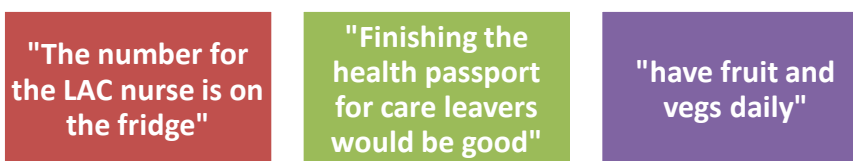
- Children are likely to have poorer health outcomes when they start to become looked after, especially where presenting issues are neglect, or where the young person is an asylum seeker.
- Looked after children are more likely to need mental health services than their peers.

#### What we know locally:

- 79% of initial health assessments were completed within timescale (March 2016)
- 88% of looked after children were up to date with their immunisations
- Around 70% of looked after children are expected to have a strengths and difficulties questionnaire completed by April 2017

- Over 90% of looked after children have received a health assessment within the last 12 months
- 95% of under 5s had their health checks (March 2016)

### What did our children and young people say:



### What have we done?

- We refreshed our guidance and system for the completion of SDQ's which resulted in 60.1% of children and young people having an SDQ completed for 15/16, a significant increase from 9.3% in the previous year.
- We have commissioned FLASH, a service specifically designed to meet the emotional health & well being needs of looked after children who would not otherwise meet the criteria of CAMHS.
- ICAMHS has been established, a progression of the establishment of the Tier 3 plus service, and children and young people friendly information has been part of the overall developments.
- Introduced a real time audit tool to gain the opinion of children and young people in Walsall to help us to continue to improve our services. Audits of health records have been completed to enhance understanding of practice activities and to ensure that children and young people are being engaged and listened to during care provision.
- A draft health passport for care leavers has been developed in conjunction with the New Belongings group.
- We established a system where relevant GP held health information is accessed to inform individual health assessments.
- Social Workers have direct work toolkit to support children to build a positive personal identity, a sense of personal history and high self-esteem and emotional wellbeing and will spend more time with children and young people due to the caseload pledge.
- Introduce a real time audit tool to gain the opinion of children and young people in Walsall to help us to continue to improve our services

### What do we need to do next:

- Complete more SDQ's and make sure that they are considered as part of every child's annual health assessment, to assess and provide for mental health needs, including care leavers.
- All children to have health regularly checked, and continue to enhance our monitoring of emotional well-being and health trends to inform on-going healthcare provision.
- Continue to support the sexual health needs of children or inclusion of details regarding teenage pregnancy and teenage parenthood (girls and boys).
- Support the specific needs of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children.
- Finalise and make available health passports for all care leavers.

## How we will know we have succeeded?

- Health trends and children's views will be known and services will be responsive to emerging needs.
- More children and young people have an up to date SDQ, health assessments, immunisations, have been to the dentist and specific health needs are met.
- Care leavers will have a health passport.
- Children and young people will tell us they feel physically and emotionally healthy.

## 5. Lifestyle and Leisure

Children, young people and care leavers are supported and encouraged to enjoy a wide range of leisure, cultural, sporting and social activities, including taking an annual holiday, which will enable them to fulfil their potential and make new friends. As is in their best interests they will be supported to keep in contact with family members. Children and young people will be protected from harmful and risky situations such as child sexual exploitation, going missing, and offending.

### Our pledge to children, young people and care leavers says:

- 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 for children in a long term placements
- We will make sure you have your leisure card
- Contact with people who are important to you will be actively promoted and arrangements will clearly take into account your wishes and feelings.

## What we know about looked after children's experiences nationally:

- Children and young people have needs and preferences for contact with valued people and participation in the wider community as ways to build their self-esteem and assertiveness.<sup>2</sup>

## What we know locally?

- 62% of looked after children have a passport
- 96% of looked after children told us they have a hobby (LAC survey 2017)
- 72% told us they have regular contact with family (LAC survey 2017)
- 87% of looked after children told us they keep in contact with friends (LAC survey 2017)
- 26 looked after children went missing for a total of 99 episodes in the nine months to December 2016.

## What did our children and young people say:

"Friends help me sparkle"

"Speaking to my mom and seeing her on Skype is beautiful"

"I don't have enough contact with my family and not seeing my dad"

"I have lots of friends; Lily is coming on holiday with us"

## What did we do:

- A clear system has been implemented to ensure passport applications are progressed in a timely way with the remaining 38% have an application underway.
- 38 care leavers were issued leisure passes during 2015/16.

<sup>2</sup> [www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph28/chapter/1-Recommendations](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph28/chapter/1-Recommendations) May 2015

- New belongings group advised on development of a contact policy.
- Tested the use of Skype to help children stay in contact with their families.

### What do we need to do next:

- Ensure that leisure services can easily send out annual leisure passes to looked after children by embedding the system.
- Understand what leisure opportunities children and young people are accessing, what they want and how we could support these to happen.
- Fully Implement the contact policy and toolkit.
- Further explore how safe and innovative use of ICT could help children stay in contact with friends and family.
- Explore how supporting young people to learn to drive could be incorporated into the life skills offer.
- Build resilience of children and young people through working with them, their parents/carers and people working with them, to be able to identify and manage difficult situations to keep themselves safe.

### How we will know we have succeeded:

- More children and young people will tell us they are happy with the arrangements for staying in contact with friends and family.
- More children and young people will access local leisure facilities.
- Children and young people will routinely have at least one holiday with their carers per year.
- Individual lifestyle and leisure preferences of children and young people will be known and there will be increasing evidence that they are supported where they are in keeping with overall positive development.
- Fewer looked after children and care leavers go missing, are at risk of CSE or offend.

## 6. Journeying to Adulthood

Children and young people are nurtured and supported as they journey towards adulthood and through inclusive, good quality planning and guidance will feel confident and ambitious about their future. Their plan for leaving care which will identify what support is needed and how it will be provided. Care leavers will have a home to live in, life skills to look after themselves and be supported to continue in education whether that is through training, an apprenticeship or higher education so that they can earn a living to support themselves.

### Our pledge to children, young people and care leavers says:

- We will encourage you to do things by yourself, but hold your hand when you need it
- We will provide you with clear information about what your rights and entitlements are as a care leaver
- We will believe in you and your future
- We will help you to learn about budgeting and what bills to pay
- We will help you with career plans
- We will spend some time with care leavers away from the office

### What we know about looked after children's experience nationally:

- 54% of care leavers stated that they left care at the right time. The reasons for not being the right time were mainly feeling settled in their placement and being forced to leave it before they were ready.



- More young people expressed appreciation of the opportunity to remain in foster care or semi-independent accommodation as they reached adulthood. There was pride in making progress but a value was placed on having supportive adults around you.

### What we know locally:

- 13.2% of care leavers aged 19-21 are not in suitable accommodation (December 2016) compared to 7.6% nationally.
- 59.4% of care leavers are not in suitable education, employment or training compared to 45% nationally.
- Care leavers don't always know if they have a pathway plan or if it is reviewed (Care leaver survey 2017)

### What did our children and young people say:

"Transition from foster care to care leaver is a slow process. I have turned 17 for a while and still have not discussed any plan".

"I can support myself"

"Future job and career plans are not always what I want"

"I want something closer to me"

### What did we do:

- Reviewed our transition and leaving care service and an 18 plus service was developed. This meant that young people kept their social worker until they were 18.
- A service was commissioned to pilot a bespoke approach to accommodation and support for 10 complex young people living in supported accommodation for 5 additional units of support were commissioned specifically for looked after children.
- Supported lodgings have been commissioned for care leavers.
- We have trialled a staying close scheme with two young people who were supported to move from children's homes to independent accommodation.
- We have developed two semi-supported flats as part of our children's homes offer.
- We have reviewed the referral process for placements which helps to ensure that placements better match children's needs.
- We developed a process for reviewing the quality of supported accommodation where concerns arise to help keep young people safe.
- Developed and launched TLC website which contains information about care leaver entitlements.

### What do we need to do next?

- Ensure all young people have an allocated PA at the age of 16 and all care leavers have an up to date pathway plan.
- With commissioners, providers and young people to further improve the range and choice of safe and supportive accommodation options for our care leavers who wish to live independently including Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and young people with specific needs.
- Continue to work with the range of corporate parents to increase the range of work experience and apprentice opportunities for care leavers.
- Consider the development of trainer flats within a community environment.
- Implement the delivery plan for the implementation of 'Keep on Caring' including the extension of services for care leavers to the age of 25.

- Enhance the understanding of carers and children and young people in respect of the financial skills needed for successful adulthood.

#### **How we will know we have succeeded:**

- All young people aged 16 will have a personal advisor.
- The range and quality of accommodation will have increased and the support available for living within the accommodation is suitable in meeting individual need.
- Care leavers will have access to work experience and apprenticeship opportunities through their corporate parents.
- Young people will tell us they feel confident in managing their finances.
- Young people will tell us they feel that they moved onto independence with support and when the time was right for them.

## **7. Priorities for 2017-2020**

Within these work streams, our priorities are:

1. Strengthen the corporate parenting role including support and develop our Council 4Kids, Respect and New Belongings group.
2. Make sure all looked after children are listened to so their views can help plan what we do and make it better.
3. Improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people being looked after and care leavers.
4. Ensure looked after children and care leavers are safe in their home and in their community and are cared for close to Walsall. They have suitable accommodation whilst in our care, and in line with their best interests, move quickly to a permanent home.
5. Improve education and improve access to work, education and training.

## **8. Delivering, monitoring and reviewing our plans to achieve our ambition.**

Our promises to children and young people who are looked after and our care leavers are important and we will do our very best to make sure that we keep these promises. Progress will be monitored and reviewed at the Corporate Parenting Board who will agree a schedule for this on an annual basis. Progress will be shared with C4K and New Belongings

We want children and young people who are or have been looked after to tell us when they feel we are not keeping any of the promises made in our pledge. If we think we will be unable to deliver a promise because of things that are outside our control we will ensure that C4K and New Belongings are told this with the reasons why.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy will be refreshed in September 2018 and the overall strategy will be reviewed in 2020.

For more information please contact: [Lorna Edwards@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:Lorna.Edwards@walsall.gov.uk)

## Appendix 1 - Membership, Schedule of Meetings and Governance of Corporate Parenting Board

Portfolio Holder, Children's Services	Director of Children's Services
<b>Chair of Corporate Parenting Board</b>	Member champion's from main each political party as identified
Assistant Director- Children's Services	Council4kids and New Belongings representatives
Sports and Leisure development representative.	Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children and Children Looked After, WCCG
Service Manager, CAMHS, DWMHPT	Head of Safeguarding, WHT
Head of Housing, Regeneration Services	Group Manager Looked After Children and Care Leavers, Children's Services
Group Manager Provider Services	HOS/Group Manager Safeguarding and Review
Group Manager Assessment and Protection	Head of Virtual School, Children's Services
Head of Quality Assurance and performance, Children's Services	School Link Manager, Walsall College
Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) representative	Head of Vulnerable Learners, Children's Services
Walsall Targeted Youth Support Representative	

Corporate Parenting Board meets at least 6 times per year or more frequently as requested. The Board produces an annual report including an **update on progress against the corporate parenting strategy action plan** and information on our pledges to looked after children and care leavers. This made available to Children's and Young People's Performance and Scrutiny Panel, Cabinet, Council4Kids, New Belongings Group, Walsall Safeguarding Children Board and the Children and Young People's Partnership Board.

The Corporate Parenting board has the overarching responsibility for the governance of the Virtual School. The Virtual School's Management Committee is a sub-group of the Corporate Parenting Board and is also required to provide the Board with an annual report.

## Appendix B: Corporate Parenting Strategy Sub-Groups

<p><b>1. Respect and Influence</b></p> <p><b>Lead : Julie Hill</b></p> <p>Young Person :</p> <p>Elected Member : Councillor A Nawaz</p> <p>Other members:</p>	<p><b>2. Home</b></p> <p><b>Lead : Elise Hopkins</b></p> <p>Young Person : Amy Palitina</p> <p>Elected Member : Councillor T Jukes</p> <p>Other members:</p>
<p><b>3. Education</b></p> <p><b>Lead : Lorraine Thompson, Head of Virtual School</b></p> <p>Young Person Michael Edwards</p> <p>Elected Member : Councillor E Hazell</p> <p>Other members:</p>	<p><b>4. Good Health and Wellbeing</b></p> <p><b>Lead : Amanda Viggars, Designated Nurse</b></p> <p>Young Person: Aammar Ali</p> <p>Elected Member : Councillor R Martin</p> <p>Other members:</p>
<p><b>5. Lifestyle and Leisure</b></p> <p><b>Lead: Paul Wicker</b></p> <p>Young Person: Marie Hudson</p> <p>Elected Member : Councillor I Shires</p> <p>Other members:</p>	<p><b>6. Journeying to Adulthood</b></p> <p><b>Lead : Julie Jones/ Sam Hanson</b></p> <p>Young Person: Marie Hudson</p> <p>Elected Member : Councillor T Jukes</p> <p>Other members:</p>