

# Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Tuesday 8 November 2022  
Time: 10.00 am  
Venue: Committee Room 2, Shire Hall

## Membership

Councillor Yousef Dahmash (Chair)  
Councillor Jerry Roodhouse (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Jo Barker  
Councillor Brett Beetham  
Councillor Barbara Brown  
Councillor Peter Gilbert  
Councillor Brian Hammersley  
Councillor Marian Humphreys  
Councillor Justin Kerridge  
Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince  
Joseph Cannon  
John McRoberts  
Rev. Elaine Scrivens

Items on the agenda: -

1. **General**
  - (1) Apologies
  - (2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests
  - (3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting 5 - 14
2. **Public Speaking**
3. **Participation Annual Update: Youth Council and Children in Care Council** 15 - 28
4. **SEND Update** Verbal Report

**5. Work Programme**

29 - 30

**6. Any Other Business**

**7. Dates of Next Meeting**

These meetings will be held at Shire Hall.

Meetings for 2022/2023 have been scheduled as follows:

- 14 February 2023 at 10am
- 11 April 2023 at 10am

**Monica Fogarty**  
Chief Executive  
Warwickshire County Council  
Shire Hall, Warwick

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- Declare the interest if they have not already registered it
- Not participate in any discussion or vote
- Leave the meeting room until the matter has been dealt with
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Non-pecuniary interests relevant to the agenda should be declared at the commencement of the meeting.

The public reports referred to are available on the Warwickshire Web  
<https://democracy.warwickshire.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1>

### Public Speaking

Any member of the public who is resident or working in Warwickshire, or who is in receipt of services from the Council, may speak at the meeting for up to three minutes on any matter within the remit of the Committee. This can be in the form of a statement or a question. If you wish to speak please notify Democratic Services in writing at least two working days before the meeting. You should give your name and address and the subject upon which you wish to speak. Full details of the public speaking scheme are set out in the Council's Standing Orders.

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# Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 27 September 2022

## Minutes

### Attendance

#### Committee Members

Councillor Yousef Dahmash (Chair)  
Councillor Jerry Roodhouse (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Jo Barker  
Councillor Brett Beetham  
Councillor Barbara Brown  
Councillor Peter Gilbert  
Councillor Brian Hammersley  
Councillor Marian Humphreys  
Councillor Justin Kerridge  
Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince

#### Portfolio Holders

Councillor Jeff Morgan, Portfolio Holder for Children & Families  
Councillor Isobel Seccombe, Leader of the Council

#### Officers

John Coleman, Assistant Director - Children and Families  
Jo Davies, Service Manager (Practice Improvement)  
Nigel Minns, Strategic Director for People  
Isabelle Moorhouse, Democratic Services Officer

### 1. General

#### (1) Apologies

Councillor Kam Kaur (Portfolio Holder for Education)

#### (2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

#### (3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Councillor Brett Beetham noted that he was yet to receive any information of the breakdown he requested on the Voice of Warwickshire survey.

Councillor Marian Humphreys queried whether there was an update available for the pilot

scheme where teachers were given manuals to cope with the disruptive children. Nigel Minns (Strategic Director – People) stated that the ‘Lost at School’ pilot was based on work by Dr Ross Green. It was going ahead with 34 schools and was going really well; it included collaborative training and proactive solutions model which included guidance for teachers. It is designed to address the root causes behind challenging behaviour.

The minutes were approved as a correct record.

## **2. Public Speaking**

None.

## **3. Question Time**

### **(1) Questions to Cabinet Portfolio Holders**

This was covered in 3(2)

### **(2) Updates from Cabinet Portfolio Holders and Assistant Directors**

Councillor Jeff Morgan (Portfolio Holder – Children & Families) informed the committee that the children’s home in Stratford had not opened yet because Ofsted had not conducted a site visit. All DBS checks had been approved and it was ready to open. The second children’s home will be in Leamington and will be decorated and cleaned after the current tenants move out. The third home will be in East Nuneaton. A possible fourth children’s home would be in North Warwickshire and would be for children with disabilities.

John Coleman (Assistant Director – Children & Families) added that they had learnt lessons from opening the Stratford children’s home and it was the first one Warwickshire County Council (WCC) opened since 1986. The registered manager had already been appointed for the Leamington home and it had been advertised for the Nuneaton home. All homes will be open by December 2023.

Councillor Isobel Seccombe (Leader of the Council) informed the committee that there were two processes with admissions. One is the change from children going up to schools with older pupils e.g. children going from primary school to secondary school. This went better this year than the previous year. The other admissions process is the in-year admissions which is when children move schools but this not being because of their age e.g. when a child within the county wants to move schools to another one or a new child in the county needs a school placement. These kinds of admissions are done throughout the year and they stay fairly static each year. In March 2022, the Council moved to a new online admissions system which will be beneficial in the long term. 11 out of 26 staff members in the admissions team left by summer 2022 and the team leadership did not raise the time delay issue of the system and moved on too. Vacancy data was not sent it by 1/3 of Warwickshire’s schools and they were closed during the summer holidays so they could not provide this data.

When the Leader and Portfolio Holder were made aware of these problems the Leader requested daily updates. The team worked hard to clear the backlog despite the phones ringing and lack of staff. The Council has a legal requirement to place children within 14 school days which was met for everybody as school holidays do not count in these dates. Councillor Seccombe requested a report into the project to investigate what went wrong.

In response to Councillor Barbara Brown, Councillor Seccombe stated that the team was not fully staffed but the system was working now.

In response to Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince, Nigel Minns said that the admissions team had been working long hours under a lot of pressure to deal with the in-year admission issue that the service they should be able to provide had slipped. These standards should return to normal now for schools with other queries. Councillor Seccombe requested that any issues schools had during this period should be fed back to her.

Following a question from Councillor Jo Barker, Nigel Minns said that these issues arose because there was a change in code for admissions from central government, so the new system was implemented to accommodate this new code, as well as the reasons raised earlier. There were 8000 in-year admissions last year and there were 1600 in August 2022.

In response to Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Councillor Seccombe said that the report will be fed back to CYP OSC as well as Resources OSC (as the admissions team sat within the Resources Directorate). The Chair noted that the material effect of the admissions team was felt within this OSC.

Councillors Humphreys and Seccombe praised the hard work done by the admissions team to clear the backlog.

In response to Councillor Brian Hammersley, Councillor Seccombe said she did not know if any asylum-seeking children impacted the admission numbers. Councillor Morgan said that Coventry dealt with this more and supply teachers would go into hotels hosting them to teach them. It was noted that there were similar hotels in Stratford and Rugby. The Home Office ran these hotels and managed them all differently education-wise. John Coleman said that refugee families were encouraged to apply for school/nursery admission placements normally.

In response to Councillor Pete Gilbert, Councillor Seccombe said the review should include if working from home affected staff ability.

Following a question from the Chair, Councillor Seccombe agreed to find out the time frame of the review.

#### **4. Children and Families Workforce Strategy Review (including Social Worker Health Check)**

Jo Davies (Service Manager (Practice Improvement)) summarised the two reports:

- There was a national shortage of social workers
- 5000 social workers left the profession in 2021
- National vacancy rates in 2021 went up 7% which was the highest in the 5 years
- Social workers employed by agencies increased by 3%
- Local Authorities/Trusts in the West Midlands were experiencing difficulties recruiting social workers, especially more qualified ones
- This resulted in a competitive employment market with employers using additional payments to employ or retain social workers
- This has been made more difficult because of the current economic climate

- WCC focused on showing how good the Council was to work for by reducing caseloads and making them manageable, investing money in professional opportunities for social workers and improving the quality of supervision and career development opportunities
- They focused on supporting social workers in their career by launching the Children and Families Academy which provides development opportunities across the workforce and prioritises the practice model of social work progression
- In May 2021 two new roles were introduced (Level 5 social worker which models decision making and social work practice and Enhanced Team Leader which focuses on strategic leadership and management responsibilities). Both have a competitive salary for the region and have been positive developments
- Team leaders needed more training opportunities around their leadership so they commissioned a programme that all team leaders have attended and a monthly strategic group where they focus on workforce strategy
- The two main sources of data are the Local Government Association (LGA) who do an annual health check and the DfE (Department for Education)
- The annual health checks monitor performance standards against people's perceptions of those standards. WCC performed well with schools in a strong and clear social work framework that was recommended with Ofsted
- They recognise the availability of support and supervision for social workers who felt they had the time/opportunity for their professional development
- WCC identified five days a year for each social worker to support their CPD development, some will be mandatory and some for their own professional development, More work was being done around this
- The survey had 90 questions and were scored between 0-100. They were then triangulated and scored against nine different themes
- WCC scored well against eight themes and they one the scored worst on was Covid-19 related (73% satisfaction rate); this was caused by changes in Public Health. The survey was done December 2021
- The other area of information received is the annual return to the DFA which is done annually in September. The data included a three-year profile around agency staff, vacancy and absence because they are indicators of the overall health of WCC's workforce and average caseloads. This includes the ranges within the West Midlands as well as the national ranges
- WCC reduced their agency usage and were below the regional and national averages as well as their workloads, vacancy rates were stable, turnover rates were 1% lower than the regional average
- The amount of newly qualified and level 3 social workers remained stable too but there was a reduction in level 4 social workers, some were internally promoted
- There was a marginal fall in level 2 social workers
- The plan is for 20% of WCC's social worker workforce to be newly qualified, 30% experienced social workers and 50% advanced social workers
- 51% of their social workers were level 3 which was higher than desired, but it was difficult to retain more experienced social workers
- Recruitment activity was continuing with HR colleagues and this focused-on progression and the reduction in caseloads
- However, an average case load for the year masks some fluctuations between teams and demand at different times of year which caused some social workers to feel that their



caseloads were not manageable. Work was being done to mitigate this as it affected retention

- There was a lot of consistent recruitment over two years with success but there was less success with getting more experienced social workers. There were a lot of social media campaigns and analytics about promotional media promotional stuff working with marketing colleagues. This is a cheap form of promotion and positive
- A new team leader job role with a regional competitive salary attracted some good external applicants and demonstrated the importance of ensuring salaries were in keeping regionally
- CYE retention rate improved by 10% since May 2021, this coincided with the Academy's launch. This showed it was valuable and showed the focus on coaching/supportive relationships so they can embed their learning in practice
- A policy around a minimum CPT time and a good induction will be embedded
- Work was done with HR colleagues around making learning activity programmes to make it more manageable for social workers and managers to oversee the complex social worker training programme
- There was good recruitment for level 5 posts internally who were appointed but more external candidates were wanted. They wanted to do less casework and more social work education. This was a problem because of the demand
- There was a lot of ongoing activity with the Strategic Workforce Group who have a comprehensive plan that looks at recruitment and retention. WCC received an investment, and they appointed a person within children and families and next year they need to identify how they will sustain that level of activity once they have returned to a more generic service
- WCC needs to provide more opportunities for a dedicated social work programme for experienced social workers and have the capacity for them to attend that training for their progression through a centralised appraisal process
- There was a social work apprentice scheme where WCC grows their own social workers. It has five apprentices over a three-year course. Some complete this and they are continuing to roll it out alongside other national schemes
- They started the commissioning of recruiting 25 social workers from abroad to work for Warwickshire by doing some targeted work about people who want to relocate and remain in the UK
- The development framework will be reviewed for family support workers and they were offering more training and mentoring around practice supervisors who work with social worker students
- They planned to keep supporting these students so they can advance their career by working for Warwickshire
- The Academy will offer social workers in family facing roles the opportunity to engage in research and contribute to social work education regionally. They will develop a performance dashboard to see what difference the academy made in terms of social work progression, CPD days etc.
- Celebrating successes was important so often letters and emails of appreciation were sent by the leadership team recognising their work. This was also done with awards
- A Wellbeing Day was introduced so social workers could have a selfcare day. There was also counselling support and coaching on life improvement

In response to the Chair, Jo Davies said that local authorities who did retain their social workers did so because they offered large financial incentives. John Coleman added that a review into this showed the social care market was not working because these local authority incentives. WCC

avoided them because social workers did not stay if they were being more money elsewhere. The review recommended that the DfE implement a national pay structure. The DfE will publish their response to the review in December 2022 and it was believed they would implement this pay structure. WCC had less agency staff than the national average but this was expensive (£20,000 more than a normal social worker) but this went to the agency not the social worker.

In response to Councillor Morgan, Jo Davies said a six-day training programme was implemented for team leaders to support the person they supervised and help understand the children they were supervising too. They were also given coaching sessions in their progression as a team leader.

Councillor Gilbert suggested some financial discretions to maintain good social workers. He expressed his concern with the idea of a national pay grade because of the difficulty of the job role in being a social worker. In response to Councillor Gilbert, John Coleman said their priority was to provide the flexibility for internal staff members to progress and have discussions with them on how to do this. However, they wanted to show experienced social workers that they could advance and not need to step away into a managerial role. Most people leave the authority because they are leaving the social worker profession altogether (Covid-19 accelerated this nationally) or to be an agency social worker (even though this was more difficult). The increased cost of living added to the difficulty of retention. Jo Davies added that some social workers left and returned to WCC.

In response to Councillor Beetham, John Coleman stated that agency social workers cost the authority £2.6 million in 2021; WCC was working with an agency who specialise in recruiting social workers from abroad and this would cost £125,000 for 25 social workers, plus salary. The agency trains them on UK legislation and supports them to relocate to Warwickshire. There will be 25 social workers over two years. When advertising job roles in Warwickshire, a lot of applications come from South Africa and it was difficult to carry out background checks for international applications. This had been done twice successfully without the agency. The Wellbeing Day is a day where the social worker does something for the community e.g. volunteering at Dogs Trust, planting trees etc. WCC oversee this so they know what they do on the day.

In response to Councillor Hammersley, Jo Davies informed that it took between one to three years to get a social worker qualification with the option to get an additional masters in two years. Once qualified that have one year where they learn on the job and are assessed and supported. At the end of this year they have a portfolio defined by Social Work England that says whether they met the standards to become a experienced social worker (level 3). WCC's aim is to advance this with training and an assessment period with courses that would lead to a salary increase. Requirements are defined by Social Work England about what different levels of social workers are required and there is a new standard on being qualified for more than five years in a programme, but details were not available on this yet. There was proactive succession planning with WCC being encouraged for student social workers to work at and continue their career in. John Coleman added that there were 68 social worker vacancies in WCC and 36 were agency staff. There are always 30-40 vacancies

Following a question from Councillor Humphreys, Jo Davies stated that there was there was an emphasis on CBD training especially through the Academy. They were looking at getting sustainable funding for the academy and they had a dedicated pot of money to use for leaders and practitioners to attend training events. WCC is also part of the West Midlands Regional Teaching Partnership to work with universities to support social work education in the region. There were monthly supervisions with team leaders to ensure they were doing the right thing.

Councillor Roodhouse noted that the BI dashboard should help with greater transparency with how the team was doing, especially with the Academy. There could be something internal within the Academy to monitor its progress. In response to Councillor Roodhouse, Jo Davies stated that the '5+' was a new measurement of how long somebody had been a social worker for. The Academy do a mixture of roles because there had been limited experienced social workers in the teams it supported with individual casework, doing assessments, supporting social workers etc. As the teams grow, the Academy will do less of this. The aim was for the Academy to be solely focused on training, based on what the workforce needed. John Coleman added that the apprenticeship scheme was successful in hiring and retaining different kinds of social workers. The Academy needed to be developed to become more multi-disciplinary, so everyone was equally focused on. Following a supplementary from Councillor Roodhouse, John Coleman stated that colleges were worked with for the apprenticeships as well as schools for people who want to be social workers. Career advancement was a good way to maintain student social workers. The '5+' years measurement was brought in because one possible recommendation of the care review was that only social workers who were qualified for five or more could deal with child protection cases which would put a lot of pressure on WCC and other local authorities nationally.

In response to Councillor Barker, John Coleman said they made their good pension scheme public, but most social workers hired were aged between 25-35 so they were not focused on their pension. Agency social workers had no pension or protection covers e.g. sick pay. Following a supplementary from Councillor Barker, John Coleman confirmed there was an option for sabbaticals and three social workers abroad said they planned to return to WCC if they returned to the UK.

In response to Councillor Justin Kerridge, Jo Davies said they were aiming to improve diversity in the workforce with the HR team. Recruitment videos were doing showing the diverse workforce. John Coleman added that he wanted to do something similar to what the police cadets do by working with young people who may want to become social workers.

In response to Councillor Brown, John Coleman noted that the demand for services had increased so they tried to increase Early Help staff to resolve this problem so family could get help earlier on. There were strategies to move resources around these areas and adapt to increasing caseloads. Following a supplementary from Councillor Brown, John Coleman stated that they had multi agency teams cross county. They either had a mental health, domestic abuse, and or substance misuse worker; North Warwickshire's team recently got a child psychologist. The Youth Justice team had probation workers too. The National Care Review said that all agencies should join a council-led coalition based in children's services. The multi-agency teams had reduced children in care by 1/3 because parents had been given early access to mental health help.

In response to Councillor Gilbert, John Coleman stated that the National Care Review suggested a regional bank of social workers, but this was attempted before and it was an expensive failure for the local authorities involved. Nigel Minns added that 15% of the country's social workers were agency staff because they get paid more. He stated it would be more beneficial if there were pay grade restrictions for agency staff. If there was a bank it could be possible to recruit permanent staff from.

Councillor Seccombe noted that finances would need to be focus on and at the time there was not enough staff for this bank. She suggested that working with the voluntary sector could help with this.

**(1) Annual Social Work Health Check**

This was covered in section 4.

**(2) Children and Families Workforce Strategy Review**

This was covered in section 4.

**5. Performance Progress Report Quarter 1 2022/2023**

John Coleman noted that there are 22 performance measures for CYP OSC and all of them were on track apart from six. Full details were in the report.

In response to Councillor Roodhouse, John Coleman said that the third party spend was not met because the original plan did not happen, but this was not being amended by reducing costs with building rentals. Maximising income is, when children there is a statutory duty for health services to contribute towards a care package. For children in residential care, the local CCG (clinical commissioning group) would make a financial contribution towards that package. In the past this was not utilised so more work with the health centre was being done. Contributing towards these costs made it possible to increase income. The education safeguarding training target had not been met because most of that is free as it partly paid by schools or the private sector where there was a target of £50,000. Elements of these income targets have been met.

In response to the Chair, John Coleman said there were more children on CPPs nationally because of national cases and rising awareness. A lot of auditing was done around this around the north of Warwickshire around domestic abuse issues. There were also more children needing support during the current economic climate. Work was being done differently to children at risk of CSE in a multi-agency way without a CPP. Councillor Simpson-Vince noted that it was important not to miss anything while trying to get this back on target.

Following a question from Councillor Simpson-Vince, Nigel Minns stated that some targets like the Early Help one would be met because of the work being done. However, targets like children of a EHC plan (education, health and care) would be more difficult to achieve because progress was slower because they had to stay at their placed schools. It was important to get the right help given at the right time which would be done by increasing resources to mainstream schools.

In response to Councillor Humphreys, Nigel Minns stated that there was a national health worker shortage, roughly 6-7000 in the UK. A recovery plan was in place to look at alternative approaches and one of these approaches is to change the skills mix so they use a different range of people who can do these visits to enable them to get the capacity needed. However, this meant anyone who was not a health visitor who carried out a visit did not count towards the national statistics. Following a supplementary from Councillor Seccombe, Nigel Minns said this target could be changed from the national to a local one to provide a clearer target.

In response to Councillor Kerridge, John Coleman noted that the number of children entering care had reduced by 1/3 because of the early support for the families keeping children safe. These

reports are now aligned to the Council Plan, and it showed the ones that were not on track and what the plan was to get them back on track.

## **6. Work Programme**

Councillor Kerridge requested an update on the children and young family centres. John Coleman informed the committee that an independent review into these centres was imminent and will include the location of the centres. The outcome of this review could be presented at February's or April's meeting. Councillor Kerridge asked for the providers to provide outreach to the local areas. John Coleman agreed for feedback from this to be shared with the committee.

Councillor Morgan requested that an update on the Virtual Schools be put on work programme for February.

## **7. Any Other Business**

Councillor Kerridge requested more clarification on how money was spent in each area in relation to the Council budget.

A discussion followed on paper copies of papers at meetings.

## **8. Date of Next Meeting**

8<sup>th</sup> November 2022 at 10am

The meeting rose at 12:46

.....  
Chair

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## **Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**8 November 2022**

### **Children & Young People's Participation Update**

#### **1. Recommendation(s)**

- 1.1 The Committee note the positive contributions that children and young people (C&YP) have made to support improvements to WCC services.
- 1.2 The Committee note the changes to the Participation Team and expansion of responsibilities.
- 1.3 The Committee re-establish a Task & Finish Group on Mental Health & Wellbeing agreed prior to Covid, so members of the Youth Council, Forum for C&YP with SEND, Children in Care Council and Care Leaver Forum meet on a quarterly basis with 2-3 members of the C&YP OSC Subcommittee.
- 1.4 The Committee agree a rota where elected members attend bimonthly the Youth Council, Forum for C&YP with SEND, Children in Care Council and Care Leaver Forum.
- 1.5 The Committee agree that the Youth Council, Forum for C&YP with SEND, Children in Care Council and Care Leaver Forum will be invited to attend the C&YP OSC Subcommittee on an annual basis to present their annual report on the actions/achievements and key messages to members.

#### **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1 The Committee received a report on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2019 resulting in the adoption of the Children and Young People's Participation and Engagement Strategy 2019-2023.
- 2.2 The Committee received a report on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2019 providing an overview and update on the Participation and Engagement of C&YP.
- 2.3 The Committee was due to receive a report on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2020, however, the Committee meeting was cancelled because of the public health crisis and lockdown. The report was received by the Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020. The report also considered the implications of Covid-19 on the progress of Participation and Engagement.
- 2.4 This update covers the period July 2021 to September 2022.

### 3. Financial Implications

3.1 There are no significant financial implications to consider at this stage.

### 4. Environmental Implications

4.1 There are no significant environmental implications to consider at this stage.

### 5. Supporting Information

#### 5.1 **Overview**

Over the last 3 years Children & Families have established an active and progressive Participation Team. In particular, the service has been able to change the culture and approach on how we engage, co-produce and listen to young people, moving the service from piece meal engagement to real listening and involvement of young people within services at a design and individual level. This is encompassed by the restorative practice approach of “**doing *with* rather than *to* or *for* people**”.

The Participation Team have been very successful mainly with **children in care and care experienced** young people. Children and Families want to build upon the strengths of these care experienced forums by widening the influence and success of the Participation Team.

#### ***New Participation Team***

The service has pulled together Participation with Children, Young People and Parents/Carers under one Participation Team. The team will now lead all participation across Children and Education Services. This includes:

- SEND - establishing a Forum for C&YP with SEND and supporting the SEND Parent/Carer Forum (from July 2021)
- Youth Council - universal young person's voice (from April 2022)
- Children in Care Council - focus on Warwickshire children in care up to the age of 16.
- Care Leaver Forum (including Young Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers) - for Warwickshire care experienced young people aged 16 plus.
- Parent/Carer Voice - our group of parents/carers (SGO, not foster carers) who have involvement with Early Help or Children's Social Care

A new structure is now in place (since April 2022) as follows.

- Operational Lead
- 3 Development Officers
- 3 Participation Support Officers



- 3 Apprentices

## 5.2 **Children in Care Council & Care Leavers Forums**

In July 2021 care experienced young people addressed a Children & Families conference of 600 staff and told the attendees that young people struggle most with the following 4 areas.

- getting regular consistent mental health support
- help with feeling isolated and alone
- having the right support (especially when becoming a parent)
- knowing and understanding their rights and entitlements

The Children in Care Council meet on the first Tuesday of each month. Their key contributions over the last year are described below.

### **a. Cross Ministerial Board Meeting Mon 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

Liss Phillips was invited by the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum to deliver an online presentation on the “Baby Box Project” to a Cross Ministerial Board. Liss Phillips was one of 2 young people delivering to Ministers on the theme of “Health Support” for care leavers.

Mark Riddell (National Implementation Advisors for Care Leavers) was also present at the Board meeting and later sent a communication to Nigel Minns (Director of People Group),

“Hi Nigel I do hope you are well. As you know I was on the call yesterday – I am a member of the Ministerial Board where Liss presented fabulously the Baby Box Project she is leading on. It was in front of Cabinet Office and Ministers. I wonder if I could arrange to come and spend the day in Warwickshire with Liss and others to see how your leaving care offer has shaped up.....”.

Isabelle Trowler, the Chief Social Worker of England also heard about this project and visited Warwickshire to hear more about this work.

“I must say, I was very taken with all that I heard. It's *social* action at its best.

Lauren is going to do a write up for Departmental colleagues and we will distribute some of this too, if that is ok? I will also make sure the Care Review Chair knows about my visit too, although I guess he may already have you on his radar.

Very best wishes and send my thanks to everyone again. I have cc'd in John.

Isabelle”

**b. Young Inspectors August/September 2021**

Young people carried inspection of 9 different Supported Accommodation venues over August and September 2021. The purpose of the visits was to review whether the accommodation venues being commissioned by WCC are fit for purpose.

The feedback was reported to the Performance and Quality Team within Commissioning. Young people were particularly concerned about the standards of one venue that they had inspected.

Following young people's feedback, Performance and Quality staff met with the venue to discuss improvements. Young people are pleased to report the positive changes to refit and upgrade the standard of the kitchen at the venue.



**c. Warwickshire Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government Youth Homelessness Visit - 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

Five young people met with the Homelessness Advice and Support Team (HAST) from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 5<sup>th</sup> October.

The young people's comments were as follows as presented by HAST in their feedback,

**“Young Advisers Comments:**

- The high rent in supported housing is a disincentive to working, and if in employment arrears can build up preventing move on – **it was suggested having a reduced rent towards the end of the stay in supported housing to enable a young person to work, save and achieve positive move on.** If a young person is out at work they are using less of the facilities/utilities and support on offer but paying the same.
- The different Allocation Policies in the DB's is confusing – **young people would like these to be clear and consistent.**
- Inspections of supported housing highlighted issues with:
  - Lack of staff training to provide the right advice to young people/gap in young people's knowledge of what is available to them.
  - Loneliness, increased by visitor restrictions.
  - Use of drugs in the premises and feeling unsafe in accommodation.
  - Being unable to work makes it feel both physically and mentally trapping.

- **A rent guarantor scheme available up to the age of 21 for care leavers was suggested.**
- Young Advisers were keen to have their voice heard by Ministers, **please share with them information on the [Youth Homelessness Parliament](#) where young people get the opportunity to present directly to the Minister for Housing. To find out more contact [tamzin.reynolds-rosser@stbasils.org.uk](mailto:tamzin.reynolds-rosser@stbasils.org.uk)**

“Can I once again thank all participants on the call on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021, it was great to see people again and hear from those for who this was their first time joining. In particular, I want to thank the five Young Advisers; Alisha, Umar, Ian, Liss and Demi, for their thoughtful, honest and very helpful contributions and great to hear how well everyone is doing and I am grateful to Shinderpaul for organising for us.” Jill Boak from HAST

***d. National Advisor for Care Leavers Visit - 19<sup>th</sup> October***

Mark Riddell, National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers, from DfE, visited Warwickshire at Portland House in Nuneaton on 19<sup>th</sup> October.

Mark Riddell was keen to learn about the progress that Warwickshire had made on the **Care Leavers Offer** and offered the following feedback post his visit.

“The recommendations are as follows:

1. Housing came across as a particular challenge and the need for more options for care leavers across the county.
2. A set of offers from each partner agency so that PA’s and care leavers are clear about what is on offer.
3. To consider expanding your multi-agency approach with key partners so that care leavers can access support in a ‘one stop’ approach.
4. To review your Council Tax offer in line with the letter sent from MHCLG that asks all LA’s to consider an offer up to 25yrs and that the exemption follows care leavers across LA (Local Authority) boundaries.
5. It would be good to see a leisure offer with a Plus 1 to care leavers up to 25yrs.

And finally, how well you have captured the voice of care leavers by engaging them in the co-production of their local offer is testament to your commitment to have an even better offer to care leavers.

Overall, what I heard and saw is a very strong offer to care leavers and I look forward to seeing you again in the new year.”

***e. Ofsted Inspection of Local Area Children’s Service 15<sup>th</sup> Nov – 26<sup>th</sup> Nov 2021***

As part of the Ofsted Inspection two meetings were held by inspectors with the Children in Care Council/Care Leavers Form on Weds 25<sup>th</sup> November and then with care experienced apprentices on Thurs 26<sup>th</sup> November.

The feedback from Inspectors was as follows,

- the inspectors wanted to pass on their thanks to all the young people they spoke to
- the inspectors said they were a vibrant bunch, and they said they could see how the young people are helping to make a real difference in Warwickshire
- the inspectors relayed back all the area of concerns the young people raised
- the inspectors have seen lots of CIC councils and Care leavers forums and mentioned that our group was really strong.

Participation was also identified as a strength by Inspectors.

A photo album covering 3 years of activities was put together by a care experienced apprentice to share with Ofsted Inspectors to help illustrate the scope and range of work undertaken with care experienced young people.

***f. National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum Awards & Full Council Recognition 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021***

Liss Phillips was nominated for 2 awards by the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum in October 2021 and won both awards. The awards were for Best Public Speaker 2021 & Champion of Champions 2021.

It is worth noting that these are the same awards that Umar Teerab won in 2020.

Liss Phillips was invited to Full Council meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> December to have her awards recognised by the Chair and Elected Members.

***g. Brothers & Sisters Event – 12<sup>th</sup> April 2022***

Improving contact and relationships between brothers and sisters was brought to the attention of the Children & Families Service Leadership Team by the Children in Care Council. This has led to some key developments.

A BBQ and Family Fun Day for brothers and sisters in care was hosted on Tues 12<sup>th</sup> April from 2-4pm, at Myton Park Offices.

The following activities were available for foster carers and young people to enjoy, Animal Man, BBQ, Ice cream van, Soft play area, Easter egg hunt, Cake sale, Arts & crafts – Bonnet Competition and Guess the “Teddys Name”.

Approximately 50 foster carers and young people attended on the day. Below are some comments sent by those who attended.

“Many many thanks for organising the Siblings day today. The three children that I brought thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon. They particularly liked the huge ice creams!”

“All three loved the soft play and looking at the animals”.

“It must have taken a lot of organising and I just wanted to let you know that it was much appreciated”.

“Most of all it was great to see her with her siblings enjoying this. We can't wait to see the group photo with her siblings which we will display in her bedroom”.

Furthermore, an online broadcast was planned for 27<sup>th</sup> June, 12-1pm, to promote workshops that staff could attend to learn more about working with brothers and sisters in care. These workshops took place on September 12<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>.

Finally, a survey has been carried out with staff who support brothers and sisters in care. A second survey has been sent out to brothers and sisters in care to help understand their experiences of being in care.

***h. Children & Families Conference & Watch Your Words – Improving Language in Care July 15<sup>th</sup> 2022***

Work has been undertaken over the last 6 months to co-produce a booklet with young people that sets out to promote the use of more positive language within the social care setting.

This booklet is titled “Watch Your Words” and is now complete.

The booklet was launched at the Children and Families staff conference on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

***i. Apprenticeship Guide for Care Experienced Apprentices 16+ August 2022***

Warwickshire has been instrumental in leading a subgroup which has co-produced a guide for the West Midlands Participation Leads Network with young people.

The guide explains how to support care experienced young people into apprenticeships and the guide has been promoted as good practice across 14 Local Authorities within the West Midlands Region.

***j. Connect + Go Project in Partnership with Volunteering Matters September 2022***

Volunteering Matters is a charity working in partnership with Warwickshire to deliver the Grandmentors Programme.

Volunteer Matters has been successful in securing a bid through the ‘Tackling Loneliness with Transport Fund’ granted by Department of Transport. Out of the 1000 bids the DoT received, 12 have been selected for a 12-month pilot project, and Warwickshire is one of them.

The plan is to have a small vehicle and a 9-seater minibus based in Nuneaton, which will provide free transport to young people who are care experienced. This is for ALL young people in care aged 16-25 including UASC.

The smaller vehicle will be providing local transport exclusively in Nuneaton, whereas the minibus will be used across Warwickshire and Coventry. Both will be resourced by community volunteer drivers. Both vehicles will be electric.

A start date for the project will be announced shortly.

### 5.3 **Work with Young Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers**

#### **a. Football on Sundays**

Football has been taking place every Sunday over the last year with Warwickshire's UASC young people. This activity has been taking place at Sydney Stringer School in Coventry from 12-1.30pm.

The activity attracts young people living in Birmingham, Coventry, and different parts of Warwickshire. Attendance has ranged from 25-40 young people.

Young people have played the UASC team from Milton Keynes on 31<sup>st</sup> July and 16<sup>th</sup> October. Young people also entered a tournament for care experienced young people organised by Solihull on 17<sup>th</sup> September. Plans are afoot to play the Police and Fire Services in the new year.

#### **b. Allotment & BBQ fortnightly**

3 further planting beds have been created by young people this year. This makes a total of 6 planting beds. 3 have been functional over the 2021 summer period with young people being keen to be involved.

Seating benches have been bought and have been painted and decorated by young people. This work was led by a care experienced apprentice.

Young people have been growing tomatoes, courgettes, broad beans and peas. This produce is used at a fortnightly BBQ and has been given to young people to take home and cook.

Funding for this project had been secured through West Midlands Region Children Services.

#### **c. Relationship & Sex Education Workshops**

A series of workshops have been delivered by a care experienced young person on Relationships & Sex Education for young asylum seekers. The workshops are delivered in different languages, for example Kurdish, Afghan, Eritrean and Sudanese.

The purpose of the workshop is to support young asylum seekers to explore different cultural norms. Workshops were delivered in Birmingham on.

- 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> March 18 young people
- 8 & 9<sup>th</sup> June 19 young people
- 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> October

Future dates planned for delivering workshops are,

- 7<sup>th</sup> December & 8<sup>th</sup> December

**d. Pilot Mental Health Workshops 9<sup>th</sup> August**

Working in partnership with the NHS a member of the Participation Team developed a workshop to support young people to understand how stress, worry and anxiety can impact on the human body, for example on sleep.

In addition, there are techniques offered and practised with young people to encourage them to become more resilient in managing difficult emotional situations. Young people also receive a wellbeing bag.

The first workshop was delivered on 9<sup>th</sup> August with 21 young people in attendance. Future workshops are planned.

**e. Refugee Celebration Week 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

Each year in June, a national Refugee Celebration Week takes place to celebrate the contributions refugees make to UK society. This year on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022, over 100 young people seeking asylum, professionals and foster carers attended an event at the Heart of England Conference Centre, in Fillongley.

Young people were recognised for various achievements in a presentation of awards ceremony during the evening, including the UASC of the Year Award presented to Eliza Michar. The evening also involved sharing a meal together, socialising together, a performance by a young person and live music to dance to.

The attendees also viewed the first of the three films young people helped create at the event "My Experiences of Arriving into the UK".

**f. Professional Event 3 Short Films 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022**

A film maker was commissioned to produce 3 films interviewing young asylum seekers. The focus of the film is on how young people experience arriving in the UK, the support they receive and what it has been like for them to integrate within the UK.

The film maker filmed interviews and activities that young people had been taking part in over the last year.

An event for professionals took place at Northgate House on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June to launch the 3 films as a training tool for staff, foster carers and for new arrivals of young people into the UK.

Funding for this project had been secured through West Midlands Region Children Services.

**5.4 Warwickshire Youth Council & Area Forums**

The responsibility for supporting the Warwickshire Youth Council moved to the Participation Team in April 2022. Existing members of the Youth Council had agreed to extend their term of office until the next Youth Council Elections in 2024 (elections take place every two years in line with British Youth Council

advice). Planning is underway to organise online elections with schools in 2024.

Staff are currently recruiting young people through secondary schools in the interim to increase the numbers of young people participating in both the Youth Council and Area Forums. The Youth Council is being promoted with all secondary schools over Oct/Nov/Dec 2022. Early next year it is anticipated that young people will also start to engage with the West Midlands Combined Authority.

In Spring 2021, children and young people across Warwickshire shared their views in a Child Friendly Warwickshire survey. Young people told us that what matters to them most are the following,

- climate change
- mental health
- careers
- respectful relationships
- youth homelessness

The Youth Council along with other youth forums facilitated a conference based on these themes.

**a. Warwickshire Youth Conference – Future Ready 21<sup>st</sup> April**

The Youth Conference took place on 21<sup>st</sup> April at the Woodland Grange Conference Centre, from 11 to 4pm.

- 99 young people registered for the event
- 76 attended

“I got back earlier from the conference and just wanted to thank all involved. I had a brilliant day! Please pass my best wishes to everyone involved (can’t wait for the next one!)” From a young person.

“My daughter (and her friend) had a brilliant day today thank you so much. She loved the lunch and the hot chocolate at break. The relationship workshop was brilliant and she has come home with so many goodies. Not to forget and amazing life like caricature. Thanks so much for organising!” From a Mum

“It was a striking and impressive event, and I can see a lot of future in it. Well done!” David Mond, Warwickshire Climate Alliance.

“It was great to be part of it and to see so many young people there. I hope this can be a yearly event”. Chris Stephens, Prospects

“It was a lovely event yesterday and great to be a part of it!” Jennifer Shergill, Kooth

“It was great to see so many young people there, well organised and run”. Kerry Hansard, St. Basils



“Young people engaged really well and seemed to enjoy the day”. Loz Grinnell Targeted Youth Support



Following the conference a short 3-minute video was created and along with a conference report with recommendations.

#### ***b. Youth Council Meetings***

The Youth Council meet on the first Thursday of each month. The Youth Council have been working on promoting a video for young people on Mental Health and promoting a video on politics. The Youth Council have also met with staff to discuss the Levelling UP Agenda, Support to Young Carers and promotional videos on Mental Health for young people.

### **5.5 Parent Carer Forum and Forum for Young People with SEND**

The responsibility for supporting these forums moved to the Participation Team in July 2021.

#### ***a. Warwickshire Parent Carer Voice***

A gradually improving relationship has been nurtured with The Warwickshire Parent Carer Forum over the last year, with parent carers from the Forum indicating that they are “cautiously optimistic” about future working relationships with WCC, following the Pilot SEND Ofsted Inspection (from 13<sup>th</sup> June to 1<sup>st</sup> July).

A Live Feedback Form has been created to enable parent carers to feedback on their experience of services. Feedback has also been collated through webinars that have been made available to parent carers to share information and raise questions.

Training for staff members within SEND on Restorative Practices and Co-Production has been underway to help further improve experiences of parent carers who come into contact with SEND services.

***b. Forum for young people with SEND***

This area has taken a little longer to establish given the diversity of young people and the importance of accommodating individual needs of young people. Young people can lack confidence, find some environments difficult manage, feel anxiety, need a quiet space and so on. These are practical challenges that need careful consideration and planning.

A quiet space was offered to young people at the Youth Conference event on 21<sup>st</sup> April.

A forum for young people with SEND called IMPACT now meets on the third Thursday of each month.

Recently, IMPACT held an event at a Leamington venue to look at young people's priorities. We are currently waiting on a report from KIDs charity on the key findings.

**6. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps**

- 6.1 Promote and increase membership of IMPACT the forum for young people with SEND.
- 6.2 Promote and increase membership of Children in Care and Care Leavers which are now to split into 2 separate forums.
- 6.3 Promote and increase the membership of the Youth Council via secondary schools.
- 6.4 Recruit and induct a participation role to create a framework for the voice of young people to be heard within Police and Youth Justice services

**Appendices**

- 1. Warwickshire Youth Council Conference Report April 21<sup>st</sup> 2022

**Background Papers**

- 1. Children & Young People's Participation & Engagement Strategy 2019-2023
- 2. Children & Young People's Participation & Engagement Strategy 2019-2023, Children & Young People's Scrutiny Committee 15<sup>th</sup> January 2019
- 3. Children & young People's Presentation on Participation, Children & Young People's Scrutiny Committee 12<sup>th</sup> March 2019

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**Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee: October 2022**

Meeting Date	Reports	Details
27 September 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarter 1 Performance Report</li> <li>• Children and Families Workforce Strategy Review</li> </ul>	
8 November 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Council and Children in Care Council Annual Participation Update</li> <li>• CYP Customer Services Report</li> </ul>	
14 February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post-16 Participation in Education, Employment and Training Performance Report 2022</li> <li>• Virtual School Update</li> <li>• Cultural Change in Children's Social Care – performance and sustainability plan (to include information on Keeping Families Together)</li> </ul>	
11 April 2023		

**Outstanding Reports/Visits**

- OFSTED Inspection report and action plan (postponed from 22 February 2022)
- Visit for the Committee to be arranged to the Warwickshire Academy (Formerly the PEARS site)
- Visit for the Committee to be arranged to the House Project

**Future Items to be added to the Work Programme**

- The recent SEND Inspection may generate items for the work programme
- Joint meeting with the Adult Social Care and Health OSC in relation to Mental Health and its impact on Children
- Children missing school/NEETS
- Children and Families Workforce Strategy Review (including Social Worker Health Check)

**Motions from Council** – none currently

**Briefing Notes/Information to be circulated outside the meeting**

- Evaluation of Social Workers in Schools
- Post Covid – impact on services/RISE/Family Support Workers etc
- Information in relation to the work done by the Closing the Gap Board (ahead of a full item at a future meeting)
- Different Futures – Annual Report 2022

**Items on the Forward Plan relevant to the remit of the Committee**

Decision	Description	Date due	Decision Maker
None as at 13 <sup>th</sup> September 2022			

**Next Committee Meeting – please note additional meetings may be added for additional agenda items such as performance reviews. These meetings will be held at Shire Hall, Warwick unless otherwise stated.**

- 8 November 2022 @ 10am
- 14 February 2023 @ 10am
- 11 April 2023 @ 10am
- **Next Chair and Spokes Meeting - these meetings will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams**
  - Thursday 27th October 2022 at 11am