

**Corporate Parenting Board**  
**Thursday 16 November 2023**  
**Sandwell Council House**  
**5pm – 7pm**

**Present:**

*Councillor Hackett (Co Chair), Councillor J Giles, Councillor R Piper, Councillor Rahman, Councillor Hinchliff, Councillor Singh-Gill, Councillor Daya-Singh*

**Young People:**

*Lukas Butler (Co Chair), Madison Bishop, Ellie Hatton*

**Officers Present:**

*Emma Taylor (Chief Executive – SCT)*  
*Sally Giles Assistant Director (Children’s Commissioning, Partnerships and Improvement – SMBC)*  
*Teodora Bot (Director of Practice Quality and Partnerships – SCT)*  
*Mandip Chahal (Senior Joint Commissioning Manager – SMBC)*  
*Claire Tate (Senior Lead for Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health – SMBC)*  
*Nigel Collumbell Asst Director Housing SMBC*  
*Rosa DaSilva Corporate Parenting Project Officer SMBC*  
*Tom Davis Partnership and Engagement Manager SCT*  
*Dr Indu Mahabeer (Doctor for Children in Care, Medical Advisor – NHS/ICB)*  
*Jane O’Riley (Designated nurse for Children in care – NHS/ICB)*  
*Claire Hickman (Designated Children in Care Nurse – NHS/ICB)*  
*Pete Dankert (Connected Carer – SCT)*  
*Tanya Evans (Foster Carer – SCT)*  
*Gerry Lyng (Advisor – DWP)*  
*Natalie Barnes (Team Manager Mainstream Fostering, Recruitment and Assessment – SCT)*  
*Amanda Carby (Minute taker – SMBC)*

1	<b>Introduction and Apologies</b> <i>Apologies from:</i> <i>Michael Jarrett</i> <i>Jacqui Smith</i> <i>Councillor Fisher</i> <i>Councillor William Gill</i> <i>Kelly Harris</i> <i>Suzanne Allen</i>	
---	---	--

	<i>Abdul Kahar</i> <i>Balwant Bains</i>	
2	<b>To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 7.9.23</b> Minutes agreed.	
3	<p><b>Action Log 7.9.23</b></p> <p>Rosa Da Silva shared each action for an update and comments:</p> <p><b>ACTION: Sandwell Children’s Trust to present placement data to the board in November.</b></p> <p>The data will cover the following areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many children are in foster care?</li> <li>• How many are out of borough?</li> <li>• How many have remained in borough placements?</li> </ul> <p>Provide up to date data on children and young people out of borough 20 miles or more. Can this be embedded into a heat map to show a visual format?</p> <p>This action will be shared at January’s CPB meeting by Kate Mullinder/Data team with a heat map to show where young people are placed.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Sandwell Children Trust to undertake a deep dive on placements and provide an update on developments to reduced out of borough placements. Sandwell Children’s Trust are to report back to the board in six months.</b></p> <p>This is being done with Wendy Williams and EMT with the new step aside project.</p> <p>Our short term approach - A new project is being set up to review all residential and high cost placements, so there is a joint review, with consideration being given to move children into fostering households or return to family - where it is appropriate to do so.</p> <p>Longer term – SCT is currently refreshing their sufficiency strategy to set the strategic vision for the next three years. This will include a deep dive into out of borough placements, as well as placement instability and managing the market to meet Sandwell’s needs. There is a need for all our children to be placed locally within loving homes.</p> <p>In relation to the requests, Emma Taylor highlighted these are very broad questions and SCT leads need to meet to discuss specific queries and questions that the Board want to be</p>	

actioned.

**ACTION: Housing Services to provide an update on how they can provide access to larger housing options for foster families to accommodate more children.**

This work has begun. A panel has been set up to review foster families who need bigger properties. Housing Services are to identify the staff who will sit in a very short task and finish group to agree on Terms of Reference and process of the panel.

Nigel Collumbell will complete a follow up of current casework through the panel. He reported there is activity being completed to address these issues. Care leavers are already receiving Band 1 priority, provided with training flats. There is involvement with the House Project and support to ensure care leavers access the St Basil's Live and Work Scheme.

**ACTION: The Strategic Corporate Parenting Group are to review ways to increase and promote being a foster carer, and to have an understanding from Sandwell residents what the barriers are to becoming a foster carer.**

Sandwell Children Trust Fostering team have begun this work. A meeting was held with Kate Mullinder who will be Head of service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Fostering.

Teo will provide an update to the Board with regard to Sandwell becoming a Fostering Friendly Borough in the New Year.

**ACTION: The new Director of housing is to be invited to the meeting.**

Nigel shared that there is a current restructure at Sandwell Council and a decision will be made about the Housing representative attendance at this Board. Until this has been confirmed Nigel will be in attendance.

**ACTION: Sandwell Children's Trust to begin implementing "Foster Friendly Sandwell" and use examples of good practice such as Stoke as the benchmark. A meeting is to be held to review Foster Friendly Sandwell and life skills sessions.**

Cllr Hackett is to meet with Sandwell Children's Trust partners to explore the importance of Foster Friendly Sandwell.

**ACTION: The Strategic Corporate Parenting Group to map out how to increase engagement and create opportunities**

**with companies. Research and report on the good practice of other authorities. e.g. Travel West Midlands to offer reduced or free travel.**

Tom attends the regional meetings and this area of work is part of the Regional Blue Print local offer work, to ensure that there is a consistent approach to accessing large organisations to support care leavers across the Midlands.

**ACTION: Strategic Corporate Parenting Group review Access to Services: Local Offer and produce clear recommendations for the young people's Local Offer request of £154,670.**

Since the last board meeting, key partners have met to review and develop the local offer recommendations. This is item 7 on the agenda.

**ACTION: Local offer information to be shared with foster carers and to review for inclusion in foster carers training.**

This work is to be led by Sandwell Children's Trust and work is being reviewed for sign off.

**ACTION: Sandwell Children's Trust to present a post 16 pathway plan assurance report to the board in November.**  
This is item 5 on the agenda.

**ACTION: Fostering Team to review how Local Offer and information of services can be shared with foster carers and be incorporated into foster care training.**

Changes have been made to the foster care training, to ensure that carers are not overwhelmed with the abundance of information available. Changes have also been implemented to support our groups, with the newly approved carers group starting in December. This is in hopes of easing carers into the fostering role.

Tanya highlighted that there is a need to understand how carers can support care leavers and they want to know what resources and services are available so this can be shared with the young people. Information, including the Staying Put and Forever Care offers, was provided as examples that carers should be aware of in advance of a child preparing for adulthood. This enables early discussions to take place and sets expectations for carers.

Foster Carers attend support groups and the Virtual Head is in attendance. It would be beneficial for other services/resources

	<p>to be shared at these support groups.</p> <p>Tom Davies to action a strategic approach to communication with foster carers and further support to enhance foster carer training including a 3-day training offer, website information, the Local Offer.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Health Leads to provide the Board with an update on care leavers free optical and dental prescriptions.</b></p> <p>This work has begun however, health partners are experiencing some barriers. Health Partners are to provide a verbal update in the January CPB.</p> <p>Claire Hickman shared that health leads are working with colleagues to enable young people to access free eye tests from Specsavers, which is part of the NHS staff offer. A request has been made to review and identify if there could be the same arrangement for our care leavers. Dental prescriptions are to be looked at further. Health colleagues are to update at the next CPB Board meeting in January.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Scrutiny Board want to review the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024 – 2027 before they engage with young people in February 2024.</b></p> <p>The first draft of the Strategy 2024 -2027 is now in development and in schedule for January 2024. This is item 8 on the agenda.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Corporate Parenting Project Officer to ensure FIYA and VOS forums to be on the agenda and provide feedback from young people – this must be a set agenda item.</b></p> <p>This is item 4 on the agenda and will be a standing agenda item.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Strategic Corporate Parenting Group to produce an independent living booklet for care leavers.</b></p> <p>This work will be led Sandwell Children Trust and updates will be provided to SCPG.</p>	
4	<p><b>The Childs Voice Update from VOS &amp; FIYA</b></p> <p>Lukas, Ellie and Maddie updated the Board about what has happened over the last few months.</p>	

VOS and FIYA shared:

**What has gone well?**

The HAF activities and food programme, parent forum consultation, a foster carer thankyou and the election of new Chair Maddie and a consultation.

**What are we worried about?**

Will there be continued HAF funding? We need more members for our FIYA group, and we want to help all carers to be better carers.

**What need to be done next?**

Following up on the HAF programme – further funding. To be involved in parent forums, have opportunities to thank foster carers and arrange the end of year celebration and Christmas Party.

**We have been involved in:**

Drop in Sessions, AGM, NHS Redesign, House Project, FIYA Awards, Care Leavers Week.

FIYA will advertise drop-in sessions to all personal advisors to encourage young people to attend Metsec session. FIYA will be present at the AGM in 2024 and would hope to be part of the co-production of the AGM. They would hope to receive an update on recruitment on the NHS redesign and for the new nurse to attend FIYA.

Further work is being completed for Elections and consultations, and planning is being completed for the Christmas Party.

FIYA will work with the House Project to ensure that impact is being made with the support of the participation team. The FIYA awards will continue for 2024, and Care Leavers Week will have a diverse programme focusing on transition and independence.

Emma raised the topic of the care leavers event and asked why people thought that care leavers don't attend. It was highlighted that some young people don't feel able to come along due to a lack of confidence. There is a need to work with young people and PAs to try to encourage attendance at the event.

Lukas confirmed that all young people who win get their award – they are always recognised, sometimes in different ways, as due to circumstances they can't always attend - personal advisers can help with this.

	<p>Sally Giles shared that HAF funding is available for one more year, 2024/25, and the government will make a decision if there is further funding allocated.</p> <p>NHS Recruitment – Claire Hickman shared that the NHS is working on a joined-up service specification for all of our young people in the Black Country to ensure that all young people will receive the same health care. She confirmed that the development of a Leaving Care Nurse is at the early stages of development.</p> <p>The NHS is trying to achieve a gold standard service, it is currently at the scoping level, and Claire has asked if this can be presented to FIYA.</p> <p>House Project – FIYA has been involved with this programme at all stages.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Sandwell children Trust to work with Personal Advisers to encourage and support young people to attend care leaver events and awards ceremony.</b></p> <p><b>ACTION: Sandwell Children Trust to explore the possibility of allowing care leavers to nominate a trusted person to collect their award. Explore whether a significant adult/carer can be invited to the awards with them.</b></p> <p><b>ACTION: Sandwell Children Trust to provide enough pre-notice to the young people enable arrangements to attend the care leavers awards.</b></p> <p><b>ACTION: Tom Davies is to invite other council directorates to the Parent Forum.</b></p> <p><b>ACTION: The Strategic Corporate Parenting Group and Sandwell Children’s Trust to co-produce and organise more ‘Thank You’ events with children, young people and partners.</b></p> <p><b>ACTION: Emma Taylor/Teo Bot to inform the Trust Board chair of the need for AGM for the Trust – more co-production with our young people.</b></p> <p><b>ACTION: Care Leavers Week – Strategic Group will pick up these actions.</b></p>	
5	<b>Assurance Report for Post 16 Pathway Plans</b>	

Sarah Grant Presentation and Report was shared. This covered:

- Background/service delivery - we have 362 care experienced young people within the age of 18-25
- We have 165, 16 and 17 years olds, 92 of our young people have a co-allocated PA - we are looking to allocate a PA earlier for our young people at 15 years 9 months, a review of this is underway
- Finalising Pathway Plans – smoother transition to adulthood
- NEET/EET
- Working with Foster Carers
- Voice of Young People
- Working with Foster Carers and Providers
- Referring young people to Adult Social Care
- CiC and care leaving services review for 21 – 25-year old's
- House Project
- Emotional Wellbeing Hub
- Areas for development - Co production of Plans, Review of roles of PAs, System Updates, Quality Assurance – impact Enhancing, Independent Chairs (IROs), a Review of the Local Offer, Apprenticeships/Work Experience

**ACTION: Cllr Hackett requested for Sandwell Children's Trust to provide NEET data, figures and information to the SCPG to review due to the continued high level of young people that are NEET.**

Emma Taylor highlighted a need to focus on outcomes and impact measures of the pathways plans and what we want to achieve when following these Pathway Plans Updates.

**ACTION – Sandwell Children's Trust to provide a brief update to board on the post 16 Pathway Plans (January 2024)**

Cllr Giles asked if the local providers that the council works with offer apprenticeships to care leavers. He also requested that the CPB ask Councillors/Officers to encourage businesses that we have contracts with (as a Council) to take on a care leaver apprentice. It was identified that this initiative aligns with our social value work through the Strategic Corporate Parenting Group

CPB presentations are taking place within corporate business planning sessions which all Assistant Directors are attending.

	<p>Corporate Parenting has been identified as a priority and each service directorate will be asked to identify what and how they can support children in care and care leavers to access opportunities and employment in the family business.</p> <p>Gerry Lyng DWP shared that he is in contact with Kelly Harris in relation to NEET young people. Sandwell is on the national radar due to high numbers.</p> <p>Lukas shared opportunities that care leavers have accessed to find work, support with driving lessons, whilst others have had sessions at Malthouse as a pathway to employment via 'Think Sandwell'.</p> <p>Cllr Hackett shared that we aspire to be a 'borough with outstanding service' for our care leavers, particularly in relation to apprenticeships and employment.</p>	
6	<p><b>Progress Update on the Commission of the Emotional Wellbeing Service Pilot Scheme Until March 2025</b></p> <p>Claire Tate gave an update to the Board.</p> <p>There is a joint objective for both the Strategic Corporate Parenting Board and the Thrive Operational Group to have a 'getting help' service specifically for both children in the care system and care leavers.</p> <p>SMBC have made £400,000 available from covid funds, this funding is non-recurrent. The service is planned to run for approximately 15 months until March 2025. A multi-agency task and finish group proposed to test three pilots based on the greatest needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wellbeing assessment following children entering care</li> <li>• To support children, young people, and the wider network where two placement breakdowns have occurred, with the aim of avoiding a third placement breakdown</li> <li>• To have a getting help service for care leavers.</li> </ul> <p>A pre-market review of services was completed. It has been identified that a provider with experience of similar programme delivery could provide consistency by delivering all 3 programmes. Work is being completed to review the proposed model of 4 co-located staff, admin support, locality manager and a formal evaluation.</p>	

	<p><b>Next steps moving forward</b></p> <p>The service specification has been reviewed and checked by procurement and it is awaiting final sign off from finance and legal for contract can be put in place. The earliest this could start is December, dependent on sign off and recruitment. Contract management meetings will be in place to offer the necessary support to ensure the success of the pilot. This will also aid for planning for next steps. Updates will be provided to the Strategic Corporate Parenting Group.</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>Tanya shared that she worries about children who may fall through the gap. She sees great work from our Looked After Children Nurses – who sit with families and work with them. This way of working should be promoted more. This builds a relationship, works on accountability, and it links us all together.</p> <p>Emma Taylor asked that a discussion be held outside of this meeting with regard to preventing placement breakdowns, to look at the specifications of this pilot.</p> <p>This service will compliment what we already have in place. It will be bespoke and used as a ‘test and learn’ process. If this does not fit in with our young people, there is the ability to change as we want to step in early and provide support as soon as possible. The provider is aware of the need to be flexible across three different areas and is aware this is a pilot</p> <p><b>ACTION – Claire Tate is to present a mid-progress report to the board (June/July 2024) on the emotional wellbeing pilot.</b></p>	
7	<p><b>Progress Report on Access to Services - Local Offer Recommendations</b></p> <p>Local Offer for care leavers – we had 24 initiatives. 16 have been delivered on. We need to work on the final 8 initiatives for our Care Leavers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lifelong Links/Significant Adults/Care Ambassadors</li> <li>• Apprenticeships – funding gap – trying to match salary to NLW</li> <li>• Increase University Bursary</li> <li>• Introduce ‘Plus One’ Leisure Pass</li> <li>• Free Eye Tests and glasses ICB colleagues speaking to Specsavers about Free Eye Tests as with NHS staff</li> <li>• Confirm Care Leaver Status as a Protected Characteristic</li> <li>• Birthday Present and Festival Allowance</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring Scheme</li> </ul> <p>The Access to Services: Local offer need approximately £80k costs per year to provide care leavers with essential support.</p> <p><b>ACTION – Cllr Hackett and Michael Jarrett are to lead the work on a corporate sponsorship deal’s as part of our social value work with partners/companies in Sandwell. Cllr Hackett requested this is to be shared with the Leadership Team, Leaders and Cabinet – this is a co-production project for all directorates across the whole Council.</b></p>	
8	<p><b>Update from Corporate Parenting Project Officer</b></p> <p><b>Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024-2027 draft outline for sign off</b></p> <p>Rosa shared a presentation which covered the Vision, Priorities, and Governance of a new Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024-2027.</p> <p>Lukas shared the list of priority areas and promises that young people had previously shared and would like to be included. Rosa confirmed all of these were incorporated into the 6 main priorities.</p> <p>Emma Taylor asked if everyone could take this back, look at the vision, and a logo – this would need to include all partners.</p> <p>Cllr Hackett shared that Sandwell wants to be a ‘Beacon’ of outstanding service for our care leavers. This strategy needs to be co-produced</p> <p><b>ACTION – The Strategic Corporate Parenting group to review the new Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024-2027 which is to be Co-produced with children and young people and multiagency partners. Further work is to be completed and to be presented to the board in January.</b></p> <p>Corporate Parenting Deep Dive Programme 2024-2025 draft for sign off</p> <p>These are the recommendations for CPB to endorse, look at, change, as appropriate – we will use this as a Planner for the year ahead – <b>this was agreed.</b></p>	
9	<p><b>Data Dashboard and Update from Strategic Corporate Parenting Group - presented by Teo Bot.</b></p>	

	<p>Cllr Giles requested for the next board meeting to provide data on our SEND children.</p> <p>Verbal data was share and confirmation that 11% of our children in care have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).</p> <p><b>ACTION – SEND data figures are to be included to the data dashboard including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The numbers of children with an EHCP</b></li> <li>• <b>What type of disabilities children have?</b></li> <li>• <b>A breakdown of children in a care home/setting</b></li> </ul>	
10	<p><b>Feedback from Scrutiny Board</b></p> <p>Cllr Hinchliff gave an update and asked that we hold an engagement session with our young people and the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee. Scrutiny Members could go to Metsec to meet our young people. Connor Robinson is the contact at the Council.</p> <p><b>ACTION – Corporate Parenting Officer to communicate with Tom Davies/Abdul Kahar and Connor Robinson to hold an engagement session with our children and young people and the Children and Education Scrutiny Committee members.</b></p>	
11	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>Cllr Hackett asked if CPB could report into and give an update to every Full Council meeting.</p> <p><b>ACTION - Cllr Hackett will report back to full Council on CPB progress. Corporate Parenting officer to begin this process with Democratic Services (Trisha Newton).</b></p>	

**Meeting ended: 6:55pm**