

**CYPF visit to the Way 14.9.21**

Cllr Wendy Dalton

Cllr Gillian Wildman

Cllr Adam Collinge

Carla Priddon CEO The Way

<https://www.thewayyouthzone.org/policies-procedures/behaviour-policy/>

<https://www.thewayyouthzone.org/policies-procedures/safeguarding-policy/>

1. Carla briefed the panel members about the support offered to children and young people during the pandemic. The Way offered 200 WIFI dongles devices to allow people to connect to the internet during lockdown. The contracts were given for three months and could also be topped up.
2. The Way offered face-to-face support to young people in a crisis during lockdown. The Way also offered welfare support to young people needing help. The Way has been opened since Sept 2019 following guidance at the time about 'bubbles'.
3. The numbers of young people attending the centre has reduced – email sent to Carla to ask for details of numbers before and after lockdown.
4. The service operates a bus collection service stopped during lockdown as could not meet the social and was not viable. The bus service operates a pick-up and return service Mon to Friday.
5. The Way is operating a normal range of services since lockdown restrictions ended earlier in the year. The service has about 1500 active members who have been at least twice a week.
6. The panel queried the support offered to young people and how they can access mental health support services and if the numbers had been lower than expected. Carla confirmed that people can self-refer themselves to the service and support is offered to young people aged 8-15 and up to age 21 years for young people with a disability. Carla commented on the mentoring scheme and described the process for matching young people – 95% of young people are matched to a mentor.
7. The panel queried the training and skills among The Way to support young people and if consideration given to offering them specific training on counselling. Carla explained that there is a specialist referral service for young people. The panel agreed with the importance of young people getting the right advice.
8. The panel discussed the issue of safeguarding and the process for reporting concerns.
9. Carla advised that most young people attending in 8 -12 years, not many young people aged over 18 attends, there is a gap in attendance among the 13-14 age range. The service is working on encouraging more young people to attend.

10. The panel commented on reports from parents who were reluctant to allow their children to attend because of the concerns about bullying, gangs from specific wards dominating the use of facility, and the poor behaviour of young people attending. There was also the issue of young people not wanting to attend because of the perceived poor reputation of the service. Carla commented about changes made to improve behaviour of young people who attend The Way. A green, amber and red behaviour scheme has been introduced which has led to improved behaviour among young people. The panel reported on specific incidents involving a fight at the centre, a child staying overnight in the building and a young person bringing a knife into the building.

The panel suggested promoting awareness to parents and young people about the new behaviour policy.

Carla challenged the rumour about a young person getting into the roof space – the building is checked at end of every day, there are security sensors in the building to detect movement, there are also two locked doors which would have to be opened in order to get access to the roof.

Carla advised that there is no charge to young people using the mini-bus and that more pick up stops have been added

Cllr Dalton spoke about a local scheme offering refurbished laptops and agreed to share details.

11. Carla advised that the service was given a grant of £250,000 to support its services during the pandemic. The Way does not have funds to offer grants to local groups. The panel discussed the promotion of The Way at local venues and suggested increasing opportunities for outreach work. The Way down your way – was suggested by Cllr Dalton as promotional slogan for working with local groups.
12. The group discussed the promotion of local activities – Cllr Wildman spoke about the visit from Olympic medallist to a boxing centre in Bilston. The suggestion was made about promoting local activities on the Councillor weekly updates that could help support local activities and help raise awareness about the offer from The Way and challenge myths. The panel discussed the opportunity for more collaborative work between The Way and local community groups.
13. The panel suggested updating The Way website to make parents and young people aware of the behaviour policy.
14. The panel discussed the issue of reports among parents of bullying and a knife being found on the centre. Carla explained the role of youth workers in challenging poor behaviour and range of activities offered to create a safe environment. The panel suggested that the promotion among parents about the qualifications held by youth workers would be helpful and the option on the website for parents to ask questions or to raise concerns about the centre.
15. The panel suggested creating a calendar of events which local councillors could help to promote and also future activities – encourage Cllrs to sign up to email alerts about events and also add details of their events.

16. The panel discussed the idea of partnership working with The Way and local community groups. Carla talked about the offer to the local communities to use the facilities available at The Way.
17. The panel were taken on a tour of The Way to see the different activities offered to young people.