

## Participation Report

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 15 November 2023

From: Service Director, Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Outcome: To ensure children and young people in care are empowered to express their voices and experiences to improve services.

Recommendation: The Sub-Committee is recommended to:

- a) Note the contents of the report.
- b) Raise any queries with the lead officers.

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# 1. Background

- 1.1 The Participation Team continues to promote the voice of children and young people in care by offering a variety of opportunities for engagement and feedback, supporting Participation groups with projects and consultations, and ensuring action is taken as a result of feedback from children and young people.

# 2. Main Issues

- 2.1 The Participation Team promotes the voice of children and young people in care, by offering a variety of opportunities for engagement and feedback. All feedback, including suggestions and ideas from children and young people is communicated to services on a regular basis, and responses on action taken is shared with the CiCC for final review.
- 2.2 The Participation Team continues to promote opportunities for children and young people under the care of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) through regular newsletters, creating event-specific publications to encourage engagement. Recent newsletters have updated young people on the work of the Children in Care Council (CiCC), Care Leaver Forum (CLF) and other participation groups including the Young Inspectors, Young Recruiters and Young Trainers, and have promoted other relevant opportunities with external organisations such as *IMO* (the Children's Commissioner's digital offering for teenagers in care and care leavers) and *Become* (the national charity for children in care and care leavers).
- 2.3 Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) and Peterborough City Council (PCC) Participation Team are no longer operating as a joint Participation Team, following the separation in August 2023. The separation of the joint CCC and PCC Participation Team is likely to impact on the feasibility and capacity for future events and activities. The CCC Participation Team has been reduced to two Participation Officers. The team continue to work on projects and activities.
- 2.4 The Participation Team organised fun face to face and virtual engagement activities in the summer holidays for children and young people across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. These engagement activities enabled children and young people to meet members of the CiCC and Participation Team and learn about different participation opportunities, make friends with other children in care and have fun.
- 2.5 Based on the feedback from Children and Young people, three Art workshops were held over the summer holidays. Feedback was obtained from the Art workshops with Children and Young People saying:  

*“Wow, that is so cool” (in reference to the effect created by adding silicone oil to the paint).....“I’m going to come to the exhibition”.....“This was really good fun”....“I want to come again”.*
- 2.6 Following the success of the Art workshops, an art exhibition is scheduled for October half term. This will be held at the Cambridge Central Library and will be open to the public to view the artwork on display. Following the art exhibition, some of the artwork will be donated to the Supervised Contact Service.

- 2.7 The Children in Care Council (CiCC) continues to meet in person monthly, to work on projects and consultation requests, meet professionals and give feedback on services. It is positive that there are a number of new young people who have been recruited to join the CiCC following the summer activities.
- 2.8 Recent guests at the CiCC have included the new Director of Children's Services Martin Purbrick, the new Principal Social Worker Tapiwa Julius and Kerry Louise Bishop Head of Service, who talked about the new Social Work Academy.
- 2.9 The CiCC has been developing a project on frequently asked questions (FAQ) that young people have for their social workers. Through discussions, the CiCC members found many similarities in the questions they want to ask, but differences in how much information they receive. They agreed that it would be useful for general information to be available for all young people, so they do not always need to ask their social workers. Work has started on developing an FAQ resource for children and young people who are in care.
- 2.10 Care Experience Forum members have been discussing their experiences and focusing on improving the support and preparation for young people leaving care. The group will be working with the Virtual School on their project of improving awareness of what it means to be care experienced, which is currently being piloted at a primary school within the county. Following discussions between the group members, the name of this group going forward has been changed to 'VOICE – Care Experience Network'.
- 2.11 The Young Trainers group continues to deliver training for prospective foster carers across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire as the service is still delivered jointly, as part of the Foster Carer Training programme. The Young Trainers will be looking at the overall training programmes for foster carers and social workers, to select other areas that they can contribute towards from a young person's perspective, and to explore ways to develop their current training sessions.
- 2.12 The Young Recruiters have worked with the Principal Social Worker in interviewing for the Practice Educator role for the Social Work Academy. The Young Recruiters have also been involved in the recruitment of management roles within the Fostering and Adoption Service.
- 2.13 Children and Young People across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire have worked on the 'Every Word Matters' project, looking at the language used about children with social care experience, sharing views and feelings on certain words and suggesting alternatives. Children and Young People recorded audio in a podcast format and shared views on what the final animation should look like. This will be used as a key training resource for professionals, as well as informing language used when meeting children and young people and in documents from policies to job descriptions.
- 2.14 A new Youth Club has been established for Children and Young People aged between 8-12 years. The Youth Club will be held monthly at a local Youth Centre, and it is hoped that this will give Young People the opportunity to engage and participate in future groups, meet each other and form new relationships.
- 2.15 Seasonal event planning is in progress. CCC Participation Team are looking to hold events at several offices during the month of December; where hot drinks, biscuits and food parcels will be provided to our Care Leavers. It is hoped that by holding such events, this will reduce

isolation, financial pressures and lead to better engagement and participation with our Care Leavers.

### 3. Alignment with the Council's ambitions

- 3.1 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2045, and our communities and natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes.  
There are no significant implications for this priority.
- 3.2 Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable.  
There are no significant implications for this priority.
- 3.3 Health inequalities are reduced.  
There are no significant implications for this priority.
- 3.4 People enjoy healthy, safe, and independent lives through timely support that is most suited to their needs.  
There are no significant implications for this priority.
- 3.5 Helping people out of poverty and income inequality.  
There are no significant implications for this priority.
- 3.6 Places and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality public services and social justice is prioritised.  
There are no significant implications for this priority.
- 3.7 Children and young people have opportunities to thrive.  
The report above sets out the implications for this priority in section 2.

### 4. Significant Implications

N/A

### 5. Source documents guidance

- 5.1 None.