

Participation Report

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 12 July 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.

Officer contact:

Name: Shalina Chandoo
Post: Quality Assurance Lead - Participation and Independent Visiting
Email: shalina.chandoo@peterborough.gov.uk
Tel: 01733 452540

Member contacts:

Names: Councillor Anna Bradnam / Councillor Michael Atkins
Post: Chair / Vice-Chair
Email: anna.bradnam@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Michael.atkins@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01223 706398 (office)

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 continues to promote opportunities for children and young people under the care of Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) through regular newsletters, as well as 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).
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 The Participation Team organised fun face to face and virtual engagement activities in the Easter holidays for children and young people across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. These engagement activities enable children and young people to meet members of the CiCC and Participation Team and learn about different participation opportunities. The joint Summer programme has also been organised in consultation with the CiCC. The separation of the joint CCC and PCC Participation Team will impact the feasibility of future joint events and activities.
- 2.4 Children and young people fed back that they would like additional opportunities to work on art and create pieces for a face-to-face Art Exhibition. As a result, dates have been confirmed for three art sessions in the Summer holidays with a view to arranging an art exhibition in the October half term.
- 2.5 The CiCC continues to meet in person on a monthly basis to work on projects and consultation requests, meet professionals and give feedback on services. Recent guests have included Councillor Bryony Goodliffe (Chair of the Children and Young People Committee) and Stephen Moir (CEO of Cambridgeshire County Council), who attended to discuss current issues affecting young people in care.
- 2.6 The CiCC have been working on co-producing the Children in Care Awards and Celebration event, and the date and venue have been sent to all Children in Care, carers, staff and Corporate Parents. The group has been looking at activities, entertainment and refreshments for all age ranges, to make sure the event is fun for everyone.

- 2.7 The CiCC has been working with Peterborough CiCC with a project to raise awareness of mental health issues. The group reviewed a spoken word poem created by their Peterborough counterparts, and provided useful feedback and suggestions for the final video which was recently published.
- 2.8 The CiCC has been developing a project on frequently asked questions that young people have for their social workers. Through discussions the CiCC members found many similarities in the questions they have, 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 don't always need to ask their social workers. They plan to work with the Principal Social Worker on developing an FAQ resource for children and young people who are in care.
- 2.9 Care Leaver Forum (CLF) members have been discussing their experiences and focusing on improving the support and preparation for young people leaving care. Recent discussions have included providing feedback to the Leaving Care Service on the Joint Housing Protocol. The Care Leaver Forum also supported a recent motion that was passed by Full Council for people who have spent time in care to be granted 'protected characteristic' status by Cambridgeshire County Council. One of the Care Leaver Forum members attended the meeting virtually and spoke about her own experiences and the importance of giving consideration to any disadvantages care experienced people may face.
- 2.10 The Young Trainers group continues to deliver training for prospective foster carers across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire, as part of the Foster Carer Training programme. Young Trainers also successfully delivered their first training session to the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) Student Social Workers in collaboration with Workforce Development. The Young Trainers will be look 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.
- 2.11 The Young Recruiters continued working with the Principal Social Worker to interview Newly Qualified Social Workers for the next ASYE places. The Young Recruiters previously worked on collating questions that can be posed to prospective foster carers and are now looking at questions that can be used on adoption panels.
- 2.12 Children and Young People across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire worked on the 'Every Word Matters' project, looking at the language used around 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 raising from policies to job descriptions.
- 2.13 The Participation Service commissioned two Leadership Training events for Children in Care across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The training, facilitated by the British Youth Council, was open to children and young people from the CiCCs, CLF, Young Inspectors, Young Trainers and Young Recruiters as part of their ongoing training and development. The sessions were followed by lunch for participants and fun activities. Children and young people gave positive feedback on the sessions which focused on confidence building and problem-solving strategies as well as leadership and decision-making skills. Following the success of these sessions, the Participation Team is working with the CiCC to decide further

development sessions for children and young people.

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.