

Participation Report

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 17 November 2021

From: Participation Team, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: N/A

Key decision: No

Outcome: An update on the activity of the Participation Service in relation to Children in Care

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. Summary

- 1.1 The Participation Team continues to adapt its face to face and virtual offer in line with changes in government restrictions and feedback from children and young people.
- 1.2 Face to face events and meetings are taking place and the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Care Leaver Forum (CLF) have continued work on their projects and being consulted by teams and services throughout the pandemic.
- 1.3 A face to face activity, virtual session and the virtual Art Exhibition were held during the October half term.
- 1.4 We successfully recruited to the vacant Participation Officer role and the new team member joined us in mid-October 2021.
- 1.5 The Young Recruiters initiative has been successful with young people continuing to be actively involved in the recruitment of staff.
- 1.6 Young people were involved in Foster Carer training and were supported by the Participation Team to design and delivery an activity and scenarios for group discussion.
- 1.7 Care Leavers successfully project managed and delivered an adventure and team building day for Children in Care over the summer and are looking forward to their next project.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee has requested an update on the work of the Participation Service in relation to Children in Care at each meeting.
- 2.2 This report sets out the activities of the Participation Service over the last quarter and an update on the work of the Children in Care Council and Care Leaver Forum.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 The Participation Team continues to promote opportunities for children and young people through regular newsletters, as well as creating event-specific publications to encourage engagement. Recent newsletters have encouraged young people to get involved in the new Young Inspectors group.
- 3.2 The Participation Team welcomed their newest member on 18 October 2021. The new Participation Officer was interviewed and recruited with the help of our Young Recruiters Group, with one Young Recruiter sitting on the interview panel with the interviewing managers, and a group of Young Recruiters also forming a panel to interview the candidates separately.

- 3.3 The Participation Team worked with Peterborough City Council colleagues to organise two activities in the October half term for Children in Care. The first event was a day at Burwell House TV Studio, where young people were able to learn some of the skills required to create their own videos. The theme chosen by the Children in Care Councils for the activity was an ideal Foster Carer, and young people took the opportunity to share experiences of where a Foster Carer supported them, encouraged them to try something new, and the activities they enjoyed with their Foster Carers. These reflections will be used to create training materials for Foster Carers, alongside similar resources being created by the CiCC for Social Workers, IROs and Designated Teachers.
- 3.4 A virtual activity for Children in Care who live at a distance or who prefer online activities was also arranged in the October half term. This was a Halloween themed online 'Spooktacular' party involving an escape room activity, with goody bags sent to participants in advance with craft items and treats. Attendees also spoke about what made an ideal Foster Carer, ensuring that all children and young people were able to contribute their feedback, whether they attended a face to face or virtual session.
- 3.5 Following the success of last year's Virtual Art Exhibition, the Participation Team invited young people from across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire to send in artwork for this year's exhibition. The exhibition premiered on [YouTube](#) on Friday 29 October, showcasing the latest masterpieces from our creative and talented young people. The Children in Care Council will be using the artwork to create cards for Social Workers to send to young people to celebrate successes, to say goodbye when they are leaving or to mark other occasions.
- 3.6 The Children in Care Council have been finalising the contents for their Coming into Care packs. These packs will be sent out to all young people coming in to care for the first time, to assist the transition and support positive relationship building with their new Foster Carers. The CiCC have also been busy reviewing consultation requests from the IRO service and have given feedback on PEP meetings to the Virtual School.
- 3.7 The Young Recruiters Group continue to be actively involved in recruitment and have recently taken part in interview panels for the appointment of a new Senior Social Work Practitioner and have been asked to be part of upcoming IRO interviews.
- 3.8 The Young Inspectors met face to face as a group in October to start their project on inspecting Supervised Contact Centres across Cambridgeshire. The group used a video tour of the first location to complete their review, while other inspections will be in person. The Young Inspectors came up with creative ideas on how the centre could be improved, to ensure young people get the most out of their family time at the centres. Once all visits have been completed, the Young Inspectors will write their report for the Supervised Contact Team, detailing their recommendations on how to ensure the supervised contact centres are meeting the needs of the children and young people that use them.
- 3.9 In October young people delivered training to prospective Foster Carers as part of the Fostering Team's training course for prospective carers. The young people were supported by the Participation Team to facilitate an activity looking at Foster Carer skills and attributes and went through scenarios with the group on how to help young people settle into new placements. The young people's input ensured the training was meaningful and relevant, and they received glowing feedback from attendees and the Training Lead.

- 3.10 The Care Leaver Forum continues to work on reviewing the information on the Local Offer, in collaboration with the Specialist PA. Throughout the summer a group of Care Leavers had planned and delivered a successful adventure and team building day for Children in Care. To celebrate the success of the project, the group recently enjoyed an activity day where they tried out virtual reality games, indoor rock climbing and indoor sky diving. The group were also able to reflect on the impact of the project on the Children in Care who attended the adventure day as well as the impact on themselves, the skills they developed through the project (and associated training) and their future aspirations. The group worked exceptionally well together to deliver the project and members have already put their names forward for the next project, due to start towards the end of this year.

4. Alignment with corporate priorities

- 4.1 A good quality of life for everyone
There are no significant implications for this priority.
- 4.2 Thriving places for people to live
There are no significant implications for this priority.
- 4.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children
The report above sets out the implications for this priority in section 3.
- 4.4 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050
There are no significant implications for this priority.

5. Significant Implications

- 5.1 None.

6. Source documents

- 6.1 None.