

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

To: **Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee**

Meeting Date: **18 September 2019**

From: **Claire Betteridge - Service Development Manager**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Purpose: To provide an update on recent participation events.

Recommendation: To comment or provide feedback on the range of consultation events and activities the Participation Service provide for children in care and care leavers.

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Summary:

- There is a plan for participation activities throughout 2019/20.
- The annual 'picnic in the park' took place at the end of July 2019.
- The Participation Team hosted a Voices Matter meeting on the 22 August 2019. This event was arranged with colleagues in fostering.
- We will have held two 'Just Us' Groups over the summer.
- The Mind of My Own Apprentice continues to promote the use of the APP offering individual and group training.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee requested an update on the work of the Participation Service at each of its meetings.

2. MAIN ISSUES

2.1 Update on Involvement of Young People

Consultation

The participation team has continued to make efforts to identify other young people who might be interested in being substitutes for the co-opted members of the corporate parenting sub-committee, so we can ensure we have young people in attendance at each meeting.

During the events we have hosted over the summer we have had a consistent theme to consult children and young people on:

- Feedback and views to be used as part of the regional participation media event which is taking place towards the end of September 2019
- Seeking ideas about the annual awards ceremony for next year 2020.

Picnic in the Park

The annual fun day was held on the 26 July 2019 at Witchford Village Hall. Once again there were a variety of fairground attractions which included inflatables, a coconut shy, hook a duck and giant board games as well as arts and crafts, a tennis tournament and the connections bus.

We also had stalls hosted by other organisations which included the library service, the Fitzwilliam Museum and Cambridge University Realise team, to promote what opportunities they were able to offer our children in care and care leavers.

From feedback received it seems as though the event was enjoyed by those who came along. Fortunately the heat wave we had experienced earlier in the week disappeared and the weather was fine and dry.

From the registrations on the day we had 40 households and a total of 132 people, which consisted of 48 foster carers and 84 children.





Impact

During the course of this event and in preparation for the regional participation media project in September we asked children and young people to give us comments on the questions in the grid below. This was the first time we used this event to obtain feedback from young people and the grid below is what we gathered, and this will now feed into the regional participation media project.

What advice would you give to someone coming into care?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You should be looking forward to it because it is fun and you get treated well. Look into options and situation. You're safe not at risk of harm :) Good food., warm, fun days out Get out asap It's OK it's not as scary as you think Think outside the box because there is always ways around every situation
What advice would you give to someone leaving care?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay away from drugs no matter what peer pressure is around Always follow your dreams no matter how hard it seems and always stay positive

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy your life and follow aspirations
What is good about being in care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People actually understand what you are going through and will always support you and your decisions and your hopes and dreams. • Families love you the same and going out. • You go out – bike shows, silly games, live music, fun fair, meeting people on bikes
What's not so good about being in care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You don't get much family contact • Scary and strange to start with • Homework :(Bedtime • Lack of career prospects. Constantly being judged because of your background

During the course of the event we provided foster carers and young people with a participation pack with information about events over the summer and how young people can get involved. We also included a copy of the participation newsletter and a form to register interest and joining our mailing list.

Impact

As a result of our promotional materials we were able to recruit two new young people who then also came along to the Voices Matter meeting at Grafham.

Voices Matter

The children in care council meeting (Voices Matter) took place on the 22 August 2019 at Grafham Water. The event was a joint collaboration with colleagues in the fostering service. The morning session hosted three separate meetings, Voices Matter, a meeting with foster carers and one for children who foster.

Of the 18 young people who attended we had 11 Girls and 7 Boys, aged between 5 and 14 years of age. The event was well supported by senior managers and elected members, who spent time with each group.

The session started with three groups working on three pieces of work, two groups did some preparation for the regional media event in September which built on the work we began at the picnic in the park, where young people were asked to comment on what advice they would give someone new coming into care and advice to someone leaving care. We also facilitated a discussion about what was good about being in care and what wasn't so great. The final group worked on ideas for the annual awards evening. Everyone had the opportunity to contribute to each piece of work.

Everyone came together for lunch and the afternoon was spent getting involved in activities which included Canoeing, Bush Craft, Archery or the High Ropes.

Impact

We are in the process of analysing feedback and learning gathered but initial findings have indicated:

- Some young people have indicated that they want to get involved in the regional media project which is taking place in September 2019 and this is being followed up to encourage and support their participation.
- We are attracting a core group of young people who are attending the participation events and meetings on a regular basis which is enabling us to build up positive relationships with them. They are also beginning to form friendships between themselves which is a pleasure to observe and support.
- A group of young people have said that they are keen to get more involved in the planning of the next awards ceremony and want to be part of a planning committee to oversee this with the participation team.

The feedback we got to use for the regional media project is collated in the table below, and further builds on the feedback from the Picnic in the Park fun day:

What advice would you give to someone leaving care?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have fun• Live while you can• Stay away from bad things and people• Remember you can always go back and meet your carers• If you need help there are always places you can go to talk for help• Stay away from drugs• Remember you have people to turn to• Make your situation, never let your situation make you• It can be hard. Try not to keep thinking about the past, the past is the past, focus on your future• Find the strength to speak out about any of your worries, feelings, emotions
What is good about being in care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foster Carer is lovely and lets me have a dog• Sometimes you don't have to change school• Going back home / reunification• Food• Foster carer• Nothing• Pocket Money• Voices matter• Watching the film you want when you are older• Carer help with my homework• I get to see my mum• I get an independent visitor• I get good holiday• Pocket money• Everything is amazing when not told of cause we get treats and surprise!!!

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling like am related in a family • Play Football • Roller skating, eat, swimming, zoo, aqua park, beach, Trampoline park, rock climbing • Craft day • Sleep
What isn't great about being in care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can't choose our social worker • Split from siblings • Respite carer • Mental health • Confusion of the situation and stress • Losing animals when moved into care • Anxiety and depression getting worse • Takes way too long to get my position back • Foster carer booking things without asking me • Transport • When they tell you off • Not good social workers • Too many changes • The social workers don't visit enough • Too many changes • Carers make you eat vegetables • Not meeting you Foster Carers • Foster carers let us down • Going to meetings • Changing schools • Getting told off • Switching social workers all the time • Room checks • Slow trust process
What advice would you give to someone coming into care?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think that you would be in a worse situation if you weren't put where you are and given help • Always remember you have a voice use it • Try to have fun • Try to make a second life • Just live life happily because you only have one • Don't run away • Don't panic • Try to relax • Keep your mental health positive • Don't run away because it will make matters worse • Try your hardest to trust people around you • You get included in things • You have a second chance in life • Try not to let it get to you. Talk to someone • Speak up and give your opinion • Make friends. Don't be afraid

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|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You have been given another chance in life• You get to meet new families and live a new life• Don't be worried• Don't push people away |
|--|---|

We did receive some specific feedback though on the day,

- a young person who had been quite reserved during the course of the day but had plucked up the courage to go canoeing and when he got back to dry land, announced he was going to be a canoeing instructor when he was older.
- Another young person enjoyed taking part in activities that they had never experienced and her foster carers told us that they are now seeking out an archery club so she can take up the sport.

In conclusion, the day was a enormous success and the feedback we have received has been very positive from both the children and their foster carers. They all are keen to have similar events in the future.



Just Us Groups

A meeting was held at Hichingbrooke Country Park on the 19 August 2019 for children and young people aged between 5 and 12 years of age. The beginning of the session covered ideas for the awards evening next year (which is still being collated) and feedback for the regional media project in September. This is summarised in the table below:-

What advice would you give to someone leaving care?	Stay positive and concentrate on the good things Look forward – don't think of the past, think of the future
What is good about being in care	Everything Learning new things Meeting new people
What isn't as great about being in care	Liked it Nothing is Bad Found settling in hard
What advice would you give to someone coming into care?	Share your worries/ don't keep them to yourself Always looking forward Don't be scared

The group then participated in some pond dipping and orienteering. There were 9 young people signed up to attend and 5 came along on the day. They were aged between 8 and 12 years. There were 2 young people who were from out of county placements.



On the 2 September 2019 another Just Us Group is due to take place at the Wisbech Adventure playground for children and young people aged between 5 and 14 years of age. At the time of

writing this report the session hadn't taken place, but we have three young people signed up to attend.

Impact

We are in the process of completely collating and analysing feedback gathered and we will be able to provide a more comprehensive overview once the second Just Us Session takes place on the 2 September.

Care Leavers Forum

We are looking to relaunch this forum and plan to have an ongoing series of drop-in sessions on offer at different venues across the county. This forum will be undertaken in collaboration with the leaving care team. We are looking to have these sessions established in the autumn 2019.

2.2. Events from other organisations we have supported

The Realise Team (Cambridge University)

The Realise Team from Cambridge University attended the picnic in the park and fed back that they found being able to network with various representatives from Cambridgeshire county council and foster carers was invaluable in respect of promoting the opportunities available to our looked after children.

Over the summer they offered a Superstar Science workshop at the end of July which consisted of four half day sessions for eight to eleven year olds and their foster carers. In addition they held two University Explore days at the end of August for eleven to fifteen year olds. Unfortunately only one young person signed up for this event so it was cancelled, but they remain committed to offer further such workshops to our children in care.

More information on the events that the Realise Team host can be found via the link below.

<https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/events/care>

Arts Award (The Fitzwilliam Museum – Cambridge University)

The Fitzwilliam Museum facilitated the bronze arts award over four days in mid-August. These sessions were open to young people aged 11 years and over. The event covered a visit to the museum of zoology, spending time at the Fitzwilliam museum viewing exhibitions and using various art techniques such as marbling and screen-printing. Each young person had a folder where they were able to collate information from the four days.

We had 5 children sign up, but only 4 were able to attend the sessions. The four young people who attended will all receive an accredited bronze arts award.

Impact

Four young people who attended will all receive an accredited bronze arts award.

At the beginning of the week the young people were asked the following:-

What, if anything, are you hoping to gain by taking part in the Arts Award?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• learning more about art• no• learn more things• better at art

At the end of the week the young people were asked the following

What, if anything, do you feel you've gained from the Arts Award?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• yes my art has got better• learning new ways of art• new skills• Yes
What did you like most about the Arts Award?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• working with new people• messy things• everything/marbling• Marbling
What did you dislike most about the Arts Award?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• nothing• nothing• nothing• nothing because all of it was fun
Do you have any other comments about your experience on the Arts Award?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• no• fun• no I am happy• no because it was all fun to do and I will be coming back to the Arts Awards

This feedback evidences that the children enjoyed the event and improved their skills and confidence in art as well as receiving an award.

The Library Service (Cambridgeshire County Council)

'The Library Presents' which is funded by Arts Council England delivers arts events in libraries across Cambridgeshire, offered to host a four day event at the end of August creating digital art characters such as Minecraft on the theme of dreams with a professional virtual reality artist.

The information can be seen at the following link - www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/arts

A young person was involved in the shortlisting of the artist, Lee Mason who was commissioned for this project (<https://www.instagram.com/leemason/?hl=en>).

Unfortunately due to low numbers of young people signing up to attend the session was only offered over two of the four days. We had six children and young people sign up, aged between 11 and 14.

Below is some examples of the work that Lee Mason has produced –



Impact

The feedback from this event will be evaluated once this event has taken place.

Regional Participation

The regional participation teams are planning to collaborate on another project and have a meeting planned for the end of September at The Junction in Cambridge. The plan is to make a film with children and young people across the region to share their experiences about their journey into care.

2.3 Participation Service

Staffing

The Participation Team currently has a part time manager, two participation workers, a business support assistant and an apprentice leading on Mind of My Own. One of the participation workers has recently resigned from their post. We will be holding interviews for this vacancy on the 9 September 2019.

Mind of My Own

The Mind of My Own Apprentice continues to target practitioners across the service who have registered for a Mind of My Own account but have not used it, offering training and support as a team or on a one to one basis to enhance practitioners understanding in how to use the application to capture the voice of the child.

The Mind of My Own developers have introduced a new statement option called “My Wellbeing”. The aim of this statement is to support young people to build resilience by helping them to understand their strengths and stressors and encouraging their mindful awareness, social connections and coping strategies.

By using this statement choice to provide feedback, as an organisation we will be able to identify which young people have resilience factors such as:

- A trusted adult in their life
- They are engaged and happy in their community
- They attend sports groups
- They have meaningful friendships and relationships

The information in Appendix 1 summarises Mind of My Own activity for July and August 2019.

CONCLUSION

The participation team have had a busy summer hosting and supporting various events. It's been great to see a core group of young people come along to our meetings and events and we are beginning to build positive relationships with them as well as observe how they are enjoying meeting up with one another and forming friendships. A growing group of children and young people are showing an interest in getting involved in shaping as well as participating in our participation events and making their voices heard.

As a team we are committed to promote and encourage our children in care and care leavers access and attend the various opportunities that are being made available to them which not only include the events and meetings we host, but what is being offered by other organisations. As a team we have been somewhat disappointed at the numbers of children and young people we have seen sign up to and attend events over the past few months. However, we have been in discussions with managers and senior managers particularly in fostering in recent weeks to explore how attendance and take up of these opportunities can be increased in the future. I am assured that there is a real commitment to ensure that foster carers will be expected to encourage our children and young people to access these opportunities going forward.

We are reliant on colleagues to support and promote these opportunities not only in fostering but in the corporate parenting teams and other professionals such as Independent Reviewing Officers who come into regular contact with children in care and care leavers.

3.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

None identified

3.1 Resource Implications

N/A

3.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

N/A

3.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

N/A

3.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

N/A

3.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

N/A

3.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

N/A

3.7 Public Health Implications

N/A

Source Documents	Location
None	