

Participation Report

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 14 July 2021

From: Nicola Curley, Assistant Director Early Help and Children's Social Care

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: n/a

Key decision: No

Outcome: Sub-Committee members will be briefed 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.

Officer contact:

Name: Shalina Chandoo

Post: Quality Assurance Lead - Participation and Independent Visiting

Email: shalina.chandoo@peterborough.gov.uk

Tel: 01733 452540

Member contact:

Names: Councillor Anna Bradnam

Role: Chair

Email: Anna.Bradnam@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01223 706398 (office)

Summary

- 1.1 The Participation Team has adapted its virtual offer in line with changes in government restrictions and feedback from children and young people.
- 1.2 Virtual events and meetings have taken place where face to face was not possible. Both the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Care Leaver Forum (CLF) have continued work on their projects throughout the pandemic.
- 1.3 The Summer programme for Children in Care (CiC) and dates of the annual CiC awards event and annual Virtual Art Exhibition have been shared.
- 1.4 The Young Recruiters initiative has been successful with young people actively involved in the recruitment of staff.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee has previously 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 has continued to adapt its offer throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, in line with changing government restrictions and feedback from children and young people. Working with the Participation Team from Peterborough City Council has increased resilience, allowed us to share learning and has provided more opportunities for children and young people.
- 3.2 Since the start of the pandemic we have sent out newsletters with information and activities as well as updates on Participation events and opportunities to children in three age categories; 11 years and under, 12 to 17 years and 18 years plus.
- 3.3 Throughout the pandemic, the Participation Team has offered virtual events where restrictions have not allowed face to face activities. These have been refined in line with feedback from children and young people and as a result, numbers attending these sessions have increased significantly. Our offer will continue to incorporate virtual events after restrictions ease for children who are placed at a distance and those who prefer to engage with us virtually.
- 3.4 The Participation Team, in conjunction with the Peterborough Participation Team, has published a summer programme for Children in Care across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This includes face to face activities including a visit to a farm, ice-skating and laser tag as well as two virtual sessions designed by our Out of Area Group. In addition, our Care Leaver Forum is planning a team building and outdoor adventure day for Children in Care, which will include canoeing and kayaking, problem solving games, bushcraft skills and team building challenges.

- 3.5 The Participation Team has launched the annual Virtual Art Exhibition open to all children and young people with Children's Social Care involvement across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Themes for this year's exhibition were chosen by the two CiCCs and are Wellbeing & Mindfulness, Animals & Nature and Sports & Activities. The deadline for submissions is 15 August and the exhibition will premiere on YouTube on 31 August.
- 3.6 The Children in Care Council (CiCC) continued to meet regularly throughout the pandemic, largely on a virtual basis. Face to face meetings resumed in June 2021 and the venue and opportunity to meet in person again have been well-received by members of the CiCC.
- 3.7 The CiCC continues to be consulted by Children's Social Care to improve services for Children in Care. Recent consultations have included working with Designated Teachers on introduction booklets they can give to Children in Care and reviewing leaflets for children and young people from the Family Group Conference Service.
- 3.8 The CiCC recently met their counterparts from Peterborough to look at their Coming into Care Packs which include information, a 'getting to know you' game, and age specific items including journals, teddy bears and water bottles. The CiCC plan to refine the information provided in the Peterborough packs so they can be launched in Cambridgeshire.
- 3.9 The CiCC also plan to create goodbye cards for social workers to use when they will no longer be working with a child or young person. These were launched in Peterborough following feedback on the importance of 'good goodbyes' and were designed using artwork from the 2020 Virtual Art Exhibition. The CiCC plan to use artwork from this year's Virtual Art Exhibition as the basis for their own designs.
- 3.10 The Participation Team has been working with the Awards Planning Committee, made up of children and young people, to plan the annual awards event for Cambridgeshire Children in Care. The Awards Planning Committee have decided on a family fun day and picnic in August, with games, art activities and a raffle, where each Child in Care receives a certificate of achievement. Social workers, Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs), teachers and foster carers have been asked to send in their nominations via an online form and the Children in Care Council plan to speak about their work at the event.
- 3.11 The Participation Team launched a Young Recruiters initiative earlier this year, to encourage more recruiting managers to involve young people in their recruitment panels, so that they can contribute their views and expertise to the selection of the best candidates. This has been extremely successful and young people have been involved in the recruitment of Student Social Workers, Social Work Team Managers, Independent Chairs and Family Group Conference Coordinators.
- 3.12 Training was arranged for all young people who have expressed an interest in becoming a young recruiter to equip them with the information and support they needed to carry out this role. 10 young people from CCC have been trained to date with further training dates being planned. Young people have told us they enjoy being part of recruitment, that it shows them their experience and views matter and helps them improve their own interview skills for the future.
- 3.13 The Care Leaver Forum (CLF) met regularly throughout the pandemic using virtual

platforms and have decided to continue to do so as they find online meetings effective.

- 3.14 The CLF has been involved in exploring the information on the Local Offer, in collaboration with the Specialist Personal Adviser, as the CCC and PCC Local Offers are due to be aligned in the future. Recently they have been comparing the information available for those looking to go into higher education, as well as those looking for employment and training. The group have come up with several ideas on how they can improve the advertising of the Local Offer and are exploring these options further. The CLF has also been exploring how Care Leavers can make the best use of their Setting Up Home Allowance, while accessing the best deals and offers available.
- 3.15 A group of Care Leavers have been planning a team building and outdoor adventure day for Children in Care using a grant secured from the Outlook Fund. The group have been meeting virtually for much of the project but have also met up in person to take part in a team building activity at a Cambridge Escape Room, where they developed team building and problem solving skills that they hope other young people will be able to develop during the outdoor adventure day. As part of the project, the Care Leavers will be completing an Introduction to Youth Work training session, where they can learn and develop skills related to working with young people. The outdoor adventure day will be a great opportunity for the Care Leavers to support on the delivery of the activities and team challenges, supported by the Participation Team, and see their event planning through to its completion.

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 Resource Implications
N/A.
- 5.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications
N/A.
- 5.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications
N/A.
- 5.4 Equality and Diversity Implications
N/A.

5.5 Engagement and Communications Implications
N/A.

5.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement
N/A.

5.7 Public Health Implications
N/A.

6. Source documents

6.1 Source documents
None.