

**PARTICIPATION REPORT**

*To:* Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

*Meeting Date:* 15 January 2020

*From:* Claire Betteridge - Service Development Manager

*Electoral division(s):* All

*Purpose:* Update on the participation of young people for the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

*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 team continue to promote the use of the Mind of My Own APP offering individual and group training.
- The Participation Team hosted a Christmas Create and Make event.
- The Participation and colleagues in the leaving care teams re-launched a care leaver forum and hosted a new event which consisted of a Christmas meal for care leavers.

## **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**

We are committed to ensuring that the links between the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee and the Voices Matter (children in care council) are as robust as possible and we remain focussed on encouraging and supporting the young people who attend the committee as co-opted members to attend the Voices Matter meetings to feedback to other young people about the issues that are discussed at the corporate parenting sub-committee and also share any issues or feedback they might want to highlight on behalf of other young people with elected members.

The participation team is in dialogue with young people who might be interested in being substitutes for the co-opted member of the corporate parenting sub-committee, to ensure optimum attendance by young people at each meeting. One young person attended as an observer to the November committee meeting and whilst she does not feel she would want to become a co-opted committee member, she has expressed a wish to engage with other events and opportunities available through the participation team.

#### **Voices Matter**

The next meeting of Voices Matter is planned for the 17 February 2020, and we have had contact with some members of Voices Matter during the October half term at the Just Us Meeting and at the Christmas Create and Make event on the 20 December 2019.

We will be taking some young people to see the Wind in the Willows Pantomime in early January, after being given 15 free tickets by The Junction. We are using this event to say a thank you to a group of young people who have been regular attendees at Voices Matter meetings.

In 2020/21 we plan to move to a schedule of Voices Matter meetings at least six times per year in order to further enhance the work of this meeting and provide more opportunities for consultation and co-production work.

14 February 2020 is Care Day, which is a celebration of children and young people with care experience. It is an opportunity to celebrate the rights of care experienced children and young people and is a joint initiative between five children's rights charities across the U.K. and Ireland, under the 5 Nations 1 Voice alliance. Become Charity in England, EPIC in Ireland, VOYPIC in Northern Ireland, Voices from Care in Wales and Who Cares? Scotland. The alliance wants a world where the childhoods of these children and young people allow them to thrive and achieve their dreams so that they go on to have a future that is fulfilled, and they are proud of. Those who care for and support these children and young people are also asked to celebrate. It is also an opportunity to illustrate how care experienced people can feel different to others and why. So, this Care Day, everyone has the chance to get vocal, get social, or to get together in celebration of the care experienced community.

We are planning to celebrate this with a Voices Matter meeting that will include a session with Xidus Pain (Becomecharity.com). Xidus specialises in delivering Lyric Writing workshops. The plan is for children and young people to express their views about being in care or leaving care and later in the week the lyrics that are captured on the day with Xidus will be used and set to music during a workshop in a Samba drumming session. This will culminate in another useful resource to support training for social workers; social care staff, carers and commissioners.

### **Just Us Groups**

Linked to the Care Day events noted above, the next Just Us Group is also planned for February half term and will be a joint session with colleagues from the 'library presents' team, which will include Samba drumming. The Voices Matter meeting will take place at the beginning of the half term week with a workshop with Xidus Pain and later in the week the lyrics that are captured on the day with Xidus will be used and set to music during a workshop in a Samba drumming session

### **Care Leavers Forum**

Up until February 2019 the service ran a small but regular group of care leavers who met on a monthly basis in Cambridge city. After a break, we relaunched the forum in November 2019. We ran two groups for care leavers in November as planned, the meetings took place in Cambridge city and the Wisbech area. Five care leavers came along to the launch sessions, and following feedback, we are working to establish regular forum meetings to take place in four different locations across the county, from January 2020 onwards. The forum will be a platform to consult with

care leavers about their experiences and give them the opportunity to engage in wider participation and co-production activities.

### ***Other Activities***

#### **Christmas Create and Make**

The participation team hosted the annual Christmas Create and Make event on the 20 December 2019, where various Christmas themed crafts were available for children. Approximately 30 children and their carers joined us for a lovely afternoon making various Christmas crafts which included pebble painting, cone elves and decorating gingerbread.

The event was well supported by county councillors and colleagues from fostering, (specialist team, kinship and fostering support team), commissioning, the children in care health team, children's centres, the supervised contact service, and a specialist PA from the leaving care team.

During the event we had two consultation events for children and young people to offer feedback on, the first was based on the Queen's Christmas Message and what would their message be to their corporate parents and the other was based on the New Year's Honours list and who would they nominate for such an award.

We are in the process of collating this feedback and will provide more information for the next Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee meeting in March 2020.





## Impact

- We continue to see a core group of children and young people with their foster carers engage in the events we are hosting.
- These events are providing valuable opportunities for children and young people to share their views in a relaxed environment with adults who understand the issues that arise when a child or young person is looked after.
- We are well supported by colleagues at these events including the fostering teams, commissioning, supervised contact and the Children Looked After health team.

## Care Leavers Christmas Meal

For the first year, we hosted along with colleagues in the leaving care teams two Christmas meals for care leavers who were going to be isolated over the festive period. The meals took place on the 23 December at Nines Buffet in Cambridge and the Embe Restaurant in

Peterborough and we used it as an opportunity to promote the work of the participation team and how they could become involved. 10 young people came and enjoyed the meal, and some expressed an interest in getting involved in future activities. There were two young people who were not able to come along but have expressed an interest in hearing how they can get more involved with the participation team, so we will be in touch with them.



## Impact

- From the discussions over the meal it was evident that they benefited from the social opportunity to meet other care leavers and it was evident that they all had some valuable contributions to make from the discussions we had over the meal, and some of the young people have expressed an interest in getting involved in other activities.
- These events provide valuable opportunities for young people to share their views in a relaxed environment with adults who understand the issues that arise when a child or young person has been looked after and the challenges that they can sometimes face when leaving care.

## **Networking and embedding participation**

We have attended the corporate parenting management away day at the end of October 2019 and to other operational based team meetings in the past couple of months to share feedback from the children and young people who have engaged in the different activities and events we have hosted. This also provided us with the opportunity to share the plans we are progressing in the participation team and how practitioners can support young people getting involved. We have dates to meet with other colleagues over the next couple of months including a co-hort of social work students.

We have established a bi-monthly meeting with key senior managers across children's social care to support the participation communication strategy and increase the number of children and young people engaging in and contributing to the participation strategy. We have met on two occasions thus far and have agreed our terms of reference and work plan which includes identifying areas of our work which we need young people to get involved with such as foster carer training and recruitment

### **2.2. Events from other organisations we have supported**

No updates to report.

### **2.3 Activities and Work Planned**

- A schedule of events based participation activities are planned for 2019 and into 2020. All children including those residing out of County are invited to attend.
- We are working with colleagues in the commissioning team to explore how we can support children and young people get involved in the commissioning and contract monitoring process. The next step is to identify a group of young people who are interested in getting involved with this work and offer a training session at the beginning of February 2020 to take this forward.
- We are planning events over the February 2020 half term which includes the Voices Matter meeting which will include a session with Xidus Pain to coincide with care day (Becomecharity.com). Xidus specialises in delivering Lyric Writing workshops. The plan is for children and young people to express their views about being in care or leaving care. Later in the week the lyrics that are captured on the day with Xidus will be used and set to music during a workshop in a Samba drumming session.
- We are liaising with Peterborough environment trust and PCVS to explore getting some of our young people who are living in the Peterborough area involved in a project with these organisations. The project is open to the age ranges of 11-18 will be tree and shrub planting around a green space hopefully in the community that our young people live in or near to, so they can see the benefit to the community as well as learn new skills.
- We are in the final stages of planning the annual awards ceremony which will be held on the 3 April 2019. Young people have informed the theme for the event - a night at the movies - where everyone will be encouraged to come dressed as their favourite movie star. An invitation has been sent out for the date to be saved in diaries.
- We are developing a protocol and toolkit for how we involve children and young people in work such as meetings with inspectors; staff recruitment; commissioning and contract management; and being involved in the delivery of training to staff and foster carers through the development of a young ambassadors programme. We are in the process

of drafting job descriptions for these roles to assist young people's understanding of what is involved in these activities and what the benefits will be for them in getting involved.

- We continue to meet with social care teams, foster carer support and other stakeholders to promote support and encouragement for children and young people getting involved in our participation activities and promote the use of the APP Mind of My Own.
- The participation team continue to promote The Promise with operational teams as part of the team visits we are currently undertaking. We have included a copy of The Promise in the correspondence we are sending to all new children in care along with our newsletter, to inform them about the participation team and how they can get involved. We will also ensure that we have discussions in the groups we are running over the coming months with young people to ensure that they know about The Promise and how they being supported with this in mind.

## **2.4 Participation Service**

### **Staffing**

The Participation Team currently has a manager, two participation workers and some support from a business support assistant and an apprentice leading on Mind of My Own.

### **Mind of My Own**

The team 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 information in Appendix 1 summarises Mind of My Own activity for October, November and December 2019. Information is only available until the 19 December 2019 due to the deadlines for this report and mandatory leave over the festive period.

## **CONCLUSION**

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, where their voices can be heard but also those enrichment opportunities that are being offered by other organisations which we can use for consultations and feedback. There is a growing group of children and young people showing an interest in getting involved in shaping as well as participating in our participation events and making their voices heard.

We are committed to ensuring that the links between the corporate parenting sub-committee and the Voices Matter (children in care council) are as robust as possible and we remain focussed on encouraging and supporting the young people who attend the committee as co-opted members to attend the Voices Matter meetings to feedback to other young people about the issues that are discussed at the corporate parenting sub-committee and also share any issues or feedback they might want to highlight on behalf of other young people with elected members.



### 3.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

None identified

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
None	