

Participation Report

To: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee

Meeting Date: 23 March 2022

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 promote the voice of children and young people in care by offering a variety of opportunities for engagement and feedback, and ensuring action is taken as a result of that feedback.
- 1.2 The Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Care Leaver Forum (CLF) have continued work on their projects throughout the pandemic, now predominantly meeting face to face.
- 1.3 The February half term engagement activities programme for Children in Care (CiC) was delivered and the Easter programme is now being shared.
- 1.4 Young Recruiters are working on the ideal worker video project alongside their PCC counterparts, which will supplement existing training and development materials for carers.
- 1.5 Feedback from children and young people has been used to develop a new draft of the CiC Promise, which they are happy with.
- 1.6 The Care Leaver Forum (CLF) are working on their latest project, a Performance based project to give young people in care the opportunity to build confidence and skills in this area.

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 Coram Voice Creative Writing Competition and apply to be a member of the Family Justice Young Person's Board to share views on the way in which the services within family justice are run and on the support they provide to children, young people and their families.
- 3.2 The Participation Team worked with Peterborough City Council colleagues to organise two engagement activities in the February half term for Children in Care. Young people attended a bowling activity and a roller-skating activity where they had an opportunity to meet other young people in care from across the county.
- 3.3 A virtual activity for Children in Care who live at a distance or who prefer online activities was also arranged in the February half term. The session was titled February Art Fest and included creating doodle art characters and origami animals.

- 3.4 The CiCC continues to be consulted by Children's Social Care and other agencies to improve services for Children in Care. Recent consultations have included giving feedback on the Young People's Guide to Fostering draft, as well as sharing ideas on how to improve young people's understanding of the Fostering Service.
- 3.5 The CiCC reviewed the Children in Care Promise at their recent meetings, giving feedback on the content and design, to work towards a version that makes sense to them. The new draft takes into account all the feedback received from children and young people incorporated into ten promises.
- 3.6 The CiCC have continued their work on the Coming into Care Packs, most recently finalising a letter from the CiCC which will go into the packs. Items for the packs have been purchased and the packs are being put together so they can be distributed to the social workers that work with children newly in care.
- 3.7 The CiCC have finalised seven designs for greeting cards for social workers to use to introduce themselves, to congratulate young people on their success, or to say goodbye when they will no longer be working with a child or young person. The cards were designed using artwork from the 2021 Virtual Art Exhibition and have been printed ready to be used by social work teams across the county.
- 3.8 Young Recruiters continue to be actively involved in recruitment and have been asked to take part in interviews of newly qualified social workers for the ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) in March.
- 3.9 Young Inspectors continue to work on their Supervised Contact Centre inspections across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire, with the next inspection dates planned in March as they were not available for visits in February. The group will then meet to write their report, detailing their recommendations on how to ensure the supervised contact centres are meeting the needs of the children and young people that use them.
- 3.10 In January, Young Trainers delivered training to prospective Foster Carers as part of the Fostering Team's Skills to Foster course. 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. Young people later commented that the carers had asked good questions, showing they had really reflected on the messages from children and young people within the training presentation. The Young Trainers have been invited to facilitate another Skills to Foster training course in March.
- 3.11 Members of the Peterborough and Cambridgeshire CiCCs attended a recording studio afternoon in the February half term to record audio for their ideal worker animated video joint project. The CiCC members also chose the animation style they would like for the videos, settling on digital animation rather than line drawing or a more traditional cartoon style. The audio is now being edited after which the artists will begin storyboarding the videos.

- 3.12 The Care Leaver Forum (CLF) members 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.
- 3.13 The CLF have also been consulted by the Virtual School about how personal education plan (PEP) meetings can be improved to make them more relevant and purposeful for young people. As a result of this consultation, several ideas started to develop. Firstly, for CLF members to be involved in the upcoming Virtual School Conference, and then to look at developing a Care Experience Roadshow, to increase awareness and provide education around the experience of children and young people in care, to help dispel myths and reduce any negative stigma and stereotypes around being in care.
- 3.14 A team of Care Leavers continue to develop their Performing to Change project. In the most recent meeting they have been collaborating with professionals in the music industry to explore and develop workshops for young people to build their confidence and skills, when performing in front of an audience. One of the participants of the project has already spent some time in a music studio, recording lyrics for their own track, and the team are looking into other areas to expand the project including poetry and drama.

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 n/a

6. Source documents

- 6.1 None.