

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 5
25 NOVEMBER 2020	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Youth Voice Worker of Children in Care Council	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Cllr Lynne Ayres; Cabinet Member for Children's Services	
Contact Officer(s):	Marya Ali, Youth Voice Worker Shalina Chandoo, QA Lead	Tel. 01733 863731

CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL PARTICIPATION REPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: Nicola Curley Assistant Director Children's Services	Deadline date: N/A
<p>It is recommended that the Corporate Parenting Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Notes the content of the report.</i> 2. <i>Raise any queries they have with the lead officers.</i> 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to each formal and informal Corporate Parenting Committee.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update from the Children in Care Council and participation services.

2.2 This report is for the Corporate Parenting Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference:

2.4.4.1 To act as advocates for looked after children and care leavers.

2.4.4.6 To monitor the quality of care delivered by the City Council and review the performance of outcomes for children and young people in care.

(a) Raise the profile of the needs of looked after children and care leavers through a range of actions including through the organising of celebratory events for the recognition of achievement.

(b) Ensure that leisure, cultural, further education and employment opportunities are offered and taken up by our looked after children and care leavers.

(c) Promote the development of participation and ensure that the view of children and young people are regularly heard through the Corporate Parenting Committee to improve educational, health and social outcomes to raise aspiration and attainments.

(d) Hold meetings with children and young people in care, frontline staff and foster carers to inform the committee of the standards of care and improvement outcomes for looked after children.

2.3 *How does this report link to the Children in Care Pledge?*

This links to the Children in Care Pledge under:

1. Respect - We will respect you as individuals, with differing wants, needs and beliefs and tailor the service you get to fit you.

5. Listen – We will support you to have a voice in your care plan and make sure you are listened to. We will ensure you know how to make a complaint or compliment about your care. You will have access to advocacy support to do this if wanted.

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

4.1 The Children in Care Council currently has five regular attendees and continues to meet on a monthly basis. Over the last quarter they have been developing their key areas of work, including:

- Successfully launching the Coming into Care packs in early October 2020.
- Planning a project for young people to design greetings cards that staff can use when saying goodbye to the young people they work with.
- Continuing to be consulted by children’s services including Children’s Social Care teams, Commissioning and the Virtual School to improve services for children in care.

4.2 In early October, the Children in Care Council (CiCC) launched the Coming into Care Packs which will be given to all children aged 2 years and over at the point they come into care.

The packs are available for 4 separate age groups between the ages of 2 to 17 years and include useful information and age-appropriate wellbeing items including teddy bears, journals, colouring books and pencils, water bottles and affirmation cards. The packs also include information about coming into care and a ‘get to know you game’ especially designed by the CiCC to help children and young people get to know their carers and the professionals who work with them.

After the launch, the CiCC members said,

“We wanted to do this project as it was a difficult time when we came into care. We would have liked to have had information available to show us who was there to support us and that we are not alone in the care system. These packs will help the young people entering care feel more relaxed and less scared about the changes in their life.”

To celebrate their hard work throughout this project, CiCC members enjoyed a dinner and bowling activity.

4.3 ‘Good goodbyes’ was an emerging theme that came out of discussions with the youth club and CiCC during a participation activity earlier in the year where the young people highlighted the importance of staff, social workers in particular, saying goodbye to the young people they work with. For their next project, the Children in Care Council are planning to launch a card design project for children in care, where children and young people’s designs will be used on greetings cards that staff can use to write personal messages to say goodbye to young people.

4.4 The CiCC have received first stage feedback on their contributions towards the Sufficiency Strategy. The Commissioning Team will be sharing the final draft of the document with the CiCC which is expected to be published ahead of Christmas.

The CiCC have also invited the Virtual School to their next meeting to provide feedback on recent changes made to Personal Education Plans following a previous consultation.

- 4.5 The Children in Charge youth club, which sits under the Children in Care Council, continue to meet virtually every fortnight during term time. As well as games, and activities, participation at the youth club has included answering 'thought tree' questions on how the return to school has been and the young people have also provided feedback on the design and contents of the Children in Care Pledge.

Efforts have been made to advertise the youth club during other participation events and through the monthly keeping in touch newsletters. The Participation Team have delivered resource packs to attendees before each youth club so that each child or young person has the materials to fully participate in the youth club activities.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions and the transition to virtual youth club, attendance has dropped as children report preferring a face-to-face youth club where they can meet each other rather than a virtual gathering. The Participation Team will revisit the possibility of resuming face-to-face youth clubs after the current lockdown.

- 4.6 Over the October half term, a programme of face-to-face participation activities were offered to Children in Care in collaboration with Cambridgeshire County Council's Participation Team. This consisted of six socially distanced activities including dance, samba drumming, outdoor activities at Grafham Centre and the Raptor Foundation and trampolining. Over 30 children and young people aged between 8 and 17 years attended the various activities, where several participation opportunities were advertised to the young people. These include joining the CiCC, Young Inspectors or youth club, supporting with recruitment of staff, training foster carers and contributing towards the regular keeping in touch newsletters.

The offer to young people placed out of area at a distance was developed through a 'Zoom into Half Term' virtual programme. This consisted of an art workshop and a lyric-writing workshop delivered over Zoom. A total of seven young people registered to these events, and all attendees gave positive feedback and suggested they would like to meet regularly as a group with similar style workshops. Where appropriate, further participation activities were also offered to the young people.

During the half term activities, attendees were invited to participate in a survey on the theme of education, including how it had felt to return to school or college after the lockdown and the support they had received from their social worker, IROs, teachers, carers and other professionals. Feedback from the survey will be shared with Children's Social Care for feedback and action.

- 4.7 All feedback from the CIC Council, Children in Charge youth group, Young Inspectors and any other feedback from young people is collated by the Participation Team and fed back to Children's Social Care via a quarterly feedback loop report. Appropriate actions are set and monitored and regular updates are provided to the Children in Care Council during their monthly meetings. Updates and opportunities are also shared with all young people through the monthly keeping in touch newsletters.

In response to the second lockdown, the Participation Team will be reissuing its virtual offer leaflet via virtual newsletters and email to remind young people, foster carers and Children's Social Care staff of the support and opportunities available.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 *This report was completed in consultation with members of the Children in Care Council.*

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 6.1 *Improved engagement with Children in Care and Care Leavers.*

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

7.1 N/A

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

8.1 *There are no changes required.*

9. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

9.1 *There are no financial implications.*

Legal Implications

9.2 *There are no legal implications, as the report is for information only.*

Equalities Implications

9.3 *Participation is an essential service for children in care and care leavers and this report demonstrates the level of participation in various events and activities.*

9.5 *Awaiting sign-off*

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

10.1 N/A

11. APPENDICES

11.1 N/A