

<b>CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM No. 5</b>
<b>17 MARCH 2021</b>	<b>PUBLIC REPORT</b>

Report of:	Wendi Ogle-Welbourn Executive Director People and Communities	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Lynne Ayres Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, Skills and the University	
Contact Officer(s):	Marya Ali, Youth Voice Worker Shalina Chandoo, QA Lead	Tel. 01733 863731

## **CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL PARTICIPATION REPORT**

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

### **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 This report 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?	<b>NO</b>	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	
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### 4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

4.1 The Children in Care Council (CiCC) has continued to meet virtually throughout lockdown and in person when Government restrictions have allowed this. Virtual meetings have not impeded the CiCC work plan and the CiCC continues to work on projects and be consulted by Children’s Services teams. The CiCC however do look forward to a return to face-to-face meetings once restrictions have been eased, so that they can take part in some team building activities and celebrate the success of their recent projects together.

4.2 ‘Good goodbyes’ was a theme that came out of feedback from young people which highlighted the importance of social workers saying goodbye to the young people they work with. Over the last quarter, a key focus for the CiCC has been finalising the designs of the goodbye greetings cards which staff can use to write personal goodbye messages when saying goodbye to children and young people. The cards were designed by the CiCC using young peoples’ submissions for the Virtual Art Exhibition in 2020 with their consent. The final designs have been digitally reproduced and will be made available for all staff to give to children and young people.

4.3 The CiCC’s Coming into Care Packs project was launched in October 2020. Twenty five children and young people aged between 2 and 17 years old have received a pack according to their age group to date. Feedback from children and young people has been positive with children reporting that they liked the items in the packs, especially the teddy bear and squishy toy. Some of the feedback indicated that the written information provided had not been looked at by the children and young people yet, and so feedback will be sought again after a period of time to measure the usefulness of the written materials and refine these as appropriate.

4.4 During the CiCC’s February meeting, members discussed the issue of mental health awareness and said that while Children in Care had access to information on mental health support services, other young people might not be as aware of the support available. The CiCC decided to make this one of their campaign focuses this year and will be discussing specific ideas to tackle this issue at their next meeting. Another area of focus for the year is ‘Celebrating Success’ including planning the annual CIC awards, more face-to-face activities and celebrations when restrictions allow this, and looking at other ways they can help celebrate the success of children and young people.

- 4.5 The CICC also spent some time discussing a suggestion of the Corporate Parenting Committee that social workers could send cards to CiC to let them know a bit about themselves, their likes and interests. The CiCC members looked at different options and concluded that they would like to set a challenge to social work teams to create profiles of themselves which could include a photo, hobbies and information about their job role to give to young people. The CiCC would be interested to see some examples of the profiles at future meetings.
- 4.6 The CICC members were pleased that members of the Corporate Parenting Committee expressed an interest in attending their meetings. The group discussed the format of this and decided they would like to invite one member at a time for a slot during their meetings and would like a profile from the member in advance explaining a bit about themselves. The CICC also will prepare some questions to ask members during the meeting to help them understand their role better. Corporate Parenting Committee Members are requested to contact the Youth Voice Worker to confirm.
- 4.7 The CiCC participated in various virtual opportunities over the last quarter. Members of the CICC co-hosted an animal themed quiz with the Cambridgeshire CiCC during the February half term virtual event for Children in Care. They also attended a regional quiz night with other Children in Care Councils from across the East of England. This was hosted by the Essex County Council Involvement Service and organised through the Regional Participation Network.
- 4.8 Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the Participation Team have been sending out newsletters and offering 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.
- 4.9 During February half term, the Participation Team invited Children in Care from Peterborough and Cambridgeshire to an animal themed virtual event titled 'February Fun'. The interactive session premiered a special video message for the children from local celebrity Aston Merrygold of pop band JLS, showing his support and encouragement to young people during this time. The session also featured a live video tour from Sacrewell Farm, showing the young people the farm's animals and answering their questions. The CiCC hosted a multiple-choice animal themed quiz that they had created themselves. In addition, there were games, craft activities and a competition. Young people also received a goodie bag in the post in advance with resources for the craft activities. Feedback was positive with young people saying they enjoyed the craft activities and in particular enjoyed the live video tour from Sacrewell Farm.
- 4.10 The Children in Charge youth club, which sits under the Children in Care Council, continues to meet virtually every fortnight during term time. Young people receive resource packs in the post with craft materials and games for the sessions. Thought Tree questions are a regular activity at youth club where young people have a chance to discuss their thoughts and feelings around different topics. Recent topics have included what the children want 2021 to look like with many of the children saying they're looking forward to an end to Covid-19 restrictions so they can meet up with friends and go shopping. Children also fed back that they enjoyed the art activities and would like to have more quizzes, which are being incorporated into future youth clubs and activities.
- 4.11 Children in Care and Care Leavers have been invited to participate in ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) social worker recruitment interview panels in early March. Young people who have signed up attended a recruitment panel training workshop in February to agree a scoring system for the interviews and discuss the kind of questions they would like to ask applicants. Young people will be supported by the Participation Team during the virtual interviews.

## 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.*

**9.4 Carbon Impact Assessment**

Children in Care Council meetings and activities are held remotely during COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. As none of the young people are currently travelling to meetings, the carbon impact is neutral.

**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