

CORPORATE PARENTING COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 5
15 MARCH 2023	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Elaine Redding, Director of Children's Services	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Cllr Lynne Ayres; Cabinet Member for Children's Services	
Contact Officer(s):	Shalina Chandoo, QA Lead	Tel. 01733 452540

CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL PARTICIPATION REPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: <i>Ricky Cooper, Assistant Director, Children's Services</i>	Deadline date: <i>N/A</i>
<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 the Participation Service.

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 Promise under:

Respecting You: We will do everything we can to make you feel cared about, valued and respected as an individual.

Making Decisions Together: We will involve you in decision making so your views are listened to, and will explain when we make a decision you may not like or agree with.

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 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 updated young people on the work of the Children in Care Council (CiCC), Care Leaver Forum (CLF) and other participation groups including the Young Inspectors, the latest on the 'Every Word Matters' project, and have promoted other relevant opportunities including opportunities with the National Children in Care Council, the charity Article 39 and the Prince's Trust.
- 4.2 The CiCC continues to be consulted by services and engaged in co-production. Recently, the CiCC has shared feedback about the questions used in PEP meetings, resulting in more young people friendly wording. Members will also take part in a Squiddle trial with the Virtual School, to evaluate how useful and user-friendly the platform is, before it is rolled out to all Children in Care. The secure Squiddle platform provides a private space for young people to communicate with their teacher, social worker or any other professional supporting the child.
- 4.3 The CiCC is making good progress on its mental health campaign. Members recorded their spoken word poetry piece about mental health at a recording studio during the February half term. They are now working with animators to bring their ideas for the video to life and look forward to sharing the video in the coming weeks.
- 4.4 The Children in Charge Youth Club recently put together a code of conduct with six simple rules everyone attending Youth Club will follow to keep things running smoothly. Youth Club activities are based on feedback from the children and have recently included clay modelling, making jigsaw puzzles, decorating tote bags, keyrings, wooden puppet making and various outdoor games. Discussion continues on the language used by professionals around Children in Care, how those words make them feel and what they would prefer, feeding into the 'Every Word Matters' project.
- 4.5 The Care Leaver Forum (CLF) has been discussing their own care experiences and focusing on improving the support and preparation for young people leaving care, working with the Leaving Care Service to share their thoughts and expertise. New members of the CLF had a meet and greet session where they discussed the importance of regular communication from Personal Advisors and being signposted to support that is available. Members also participated in a focus group on the Joint Housing Protocol and a Financial Literacy Course with the Leaving Care Service.
- 4.6 Members of the CiCC, CLF and the Young Trainers group attended a recording studio in the February half term to record audio discussion for the 'Every Word Matters' project. The recordings are being edited for a video summarising their views, and the young people are meeting with professionals to decide on the style of the final animation. The young people are also considering releasing the remaining audio from the session as a podcast and have expressed interest in being involved in future podcasts on important topics, which would enhance the training materials they have already created for carers, social workers and other professionals.

- 4.7 The Young Inspectors have been working on a new project to inspect Cherry Lodge, a residential setting for children with complex needs. This started with a meeting for the young people to plan the inspection, including learning more about Cherry Lodge and thinking about what they would look at and who they wanted to speak to from Cherry Lodge. The inspection took place in the February half term and the Young Inspectors are currently in the process of collating their views and writing the final report.
- 4.8 The Young Trainers delivered another face-to-face training session for prospective foster carers in January, with the next training taking place in March. They have also delivered their first training session for student social workers on the Council's Assisted and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). This took place in February half term and has given them the experience of how to adapt the training sessions to benefit different audiences, to have the most positive impact.
- 4.9 The Young Recruiters continue to support services recruit into roles working directly with children. This has recently included interviews for vacancies within the Leaving Care and Participation services. The group will be also working once again with the Principal Social Worker to interview Newly Qualified Social Workers for the next ASYE places. The Young Recruiters have recently accepted an invitation to work with Anglia Ruskin University to assess candidates for the Social Work Degree Program. This service has benefitted from the involvement of young people and adults across children in care and care leavers.
- 4.10 Young people engaged with the Participation service across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire attended the first of two Youth Leadership training events in February, with the second due to take place in March. This training has been facilitated by the British Youth Council and was open to children and young people from the CiCCs, CLF, Young Inspectors, Young Trainers and Young Recruiters as part of their ongoing training and development. Attendees gave positive feedback on the session which focused on confidence building and problem-solving strategies and also said they enjoyed the opportunity to make new friends from across the county. The session was followed by lunch for participants and a bowling activity.
- 4.11 The Participation Team has continued to plan joint activities with Cambridgeshire County Council for Easter and Summer 2023, consulting both Children in Care Councils on the activities planned. The Easter programme of events has been shared with staff and carers and includes a visit to an escape room, laser tag and a trampoline park, alongside a virtual crafts session. The Summer programme of activities is being finalised, and the Children in Care Awards date and venue have been confirmed and invitations sent to all Children in Care, carers, staff and Corporate Parents.

5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 5.1 This report provides an update on activities linked the Council's Corporate Priority:

Prevention, Independence & Resilience

- *Children*

6. CONSULTATION

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

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

- 7.1 Improved engagement with Children in Care and Care Leavers and improved services.

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 N/A

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 There are no changes required.

10. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

10.1 *There are no financial implications.*

Legal Implications

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

Equalities Implications

10.3 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.

Carbon Impact

10.4 Children in Care Council meetings are held face to face on a monthly basis. As the venue for Children in Care Council meetings is centrally located, young people have been able to use public transport to travel to meetings.

Other Implications

10.5 Participation is an essential service for Children in Care and Care Leavers, offering activities and opportunities to provide feedback on Children's Services.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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

11.1 *N/A*

12. APPENDICES

12.1 *N/A*