

WARDS AFFECTED:

All Wards

ITEM 5

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

20 SEPTEMBER 2016

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION
CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL: OUR VOICE**

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Report Summary

Purpose of report:

To update the Corporate Parenting Panel about participation and engagement with children and young people in care and care leavers.

Background:

A key statutory requirement for Local Authorities is to ensure that children in care participate in and contribute to decisions about their lives and also contribute to the development of services which are provided for them. A Children in Care Council (known as 'Our Voice') is established in Milton Keynes.

Corporate Priorities:

The Children in Care Council and associated engagement activities represent a central plank in the council's participation agenda, enabling children in care directly to contribute to meeting the corporate priority of *developing and maintaining effective services and interventions that keep the most vulnerable children and young people safe and prevent them from experiencing additional difficulties.*

Performance Information:

N/A

Equality and Diversity Impact:

The Corporate Parenting service is provided for children from across our community. It therefore needs to provide interventions that can meet the diverse needs of the children and young people for whom the Council is corporate parent.

Recommendations /Proposals:

Corporate Parenting Panel members are asked to consider and challenge the report.

Full Report

Children in Care Group

The Children in Care Group meets weekly at the Mathieson Youth Centre.

The group said a sad goodbye to Janet Tonge, Youth Worker, who left at the end of July. The group had a karaoke evening and presented Jan with cards and chocolates to say thank you and goodbye. Some young people gave short speeches. A new Youth Worker will begin in September 2016.

The group took a summer break and will start again on Thursday 8th September.

Targeted Youth Worker Interviews

A group of young people were involved in the recruitment of two new Targeted Youth Workers, Youth Faculty, one of whom will take over the running of the Children in Care Youth Group.

The young people first met to undertake interview training, which involved understanding the interview process and creating a set of interview questions. They created a separate young people's panel and met each candidate before feeding back to the adult panel their scores and views. Two candidates were offered posts and the young people have been informed of the final decisions.

Summer Sensation – Holiday Activities for Children in Care

A three week long summer programme for young people aged 10-15 was provided in partnership with the Youth Faculty and Virtual School. The summer programme ran from Monday 25th July – Wednesday 10th August. The purpose was to provide safe and positive activities for young people during the summer period. Activities included sports, arts and crafts, a trip to Caldecotte and a disco. The summer programme was well attended and enjoyed by the young people. The activities attracted a total of 25 young people, a number of whom don't currently attend the youth group. Carers and young people have been sent a short form to complete as part of the evaluation of the summer programme.

Care Quality Commission Inspection

During the summer, the Care Quality Commission undertook a review of services for looked after children and safeguarding in Milton Keynes. Summer programme staff captured the group's views about health reviews and general health issues on behalf of the inspectors and two young people spoke directly to inspectors by phone to give their views. The young people's input was well received by the inspectors.

Children at risk of coming into care – Summer Programme

A four week project was developed in partnership with the Youth Faculty and FAST to support young people aged 13-16 who are at risk of coming into care. The aim was to engage them in positive activities across the summer holidays. The programme included music, crafts, group challenges and trips to both Big Rock Climbing Centre and Ariel Extreme at Willen Lake. The young people were also provided with a healthy lunch. Six young people participated and really enjoyed the programme.

Our Voice (formally Today's Children, Tomorrow's Future)

The new name and logo for the Children in Care Council was revealed at the True Triumph celebration event held on Friday 1st July. This rebranding work was undertaken alongside redevelopment of the Children in Care Pledge, which was also announced at True Triumph. All children and young people who attended received a copy of the pledge leaflet in their 'goody bag'.

Our Voice representatives also advertised for new members at True Triumph. Several young people said that they were interested and have been invited to the next Our Voice meeting.

The group are continuing to work on their priorities. The development of a 'Coming into Care Pack' for children and young people will provide information about what life is like in care and give them a range of information about support services. Our Voice are also developing participation training for social workers.

Members of Our Voice joined members of the Youth Cabinet at the British Youth Council Convention in London on Saturday 25th June. They participated in workshops and learned more about this year's Make Your Mark consultation.

Our Voice took a short summer break; their first meeting will take place on Tuesday 27th September.

New2UK – Summer Programme

A programme of activities took place across the summer which included a trip to London on Monday 1st August, a bus trip around Milton Keynes, a BBQ and a trip to Morrisons supermarket to gain more understanding of consumer rights.

The group have enjoyed the summer programme and are starting to think about future sessions, including a football project. New2UK staff are keen to develop a closer working relationship with the college to better support the young people.

Supported Accommodation Commissioning

A group of young people were involved in the Milton Keynes Supported Accommodation commission to find providers for young people and young mums; representatives of these groups met separately to undertake commissioning training, read the tender documents, individually score and give feedback. The scores and feedback were shared with the commissioning team, who will take this into account in their decision-making.

Interviews

Young people have been involved in the recruitment of the Corporate Parenting Team Deputy Manager. The young people created a set of questions and interviewed the candidate before giving feedback to the adult panel.

Young people will also be involved in the recruitment of a new Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in September.

True Triumph 2016

True Triumph took place on Friday 1st July 2016 at the Ridgeway Centre. Over 230 children, young people, carers and professionals attended the event. The evening involved a range of activities such as music, arts and crafts, sports and dancing. The main event was hosted by young people, who did an excellent job. Feedback about the event from young people, carers and professionals was all very positive.

An evaluation report of the event and ideas about next year's event will be available shortly.