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CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL: TODAY'S CHILDREN TOMORROW'S FUTURE

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Report Summary

Purpose of report:

To update Corporate Parenting Panel about the activities of Milton Keynes Council Today's Children Tomorrows Future (TCTF) since the last report.

Background:

Local Authorities are required to establish mechanisms which empower young people to act positively and effect change in their own lives. A Children in Care Council (TCTF) is established in Milton Keynes to enable regular, good quality dialogue and involvement in the planning and delivering of services, and to ensure that the Children In Care Council has direct links to the Director of Children's Services and Elected Members. The existence, quality and effectiveness of this arrangement is monitored by Ofsted through inspection.

Corporate Priorities:

TCTF represent a central plank in the council's participation agenda through which we seek to provide responsive and effective services. Through active engagement with and listening to service users, we aim to ensure that those services meet the expressed needs and improve outcomes for children in care and those leaving care, in line with the Council's Children & Families 2013/14 priority to deliver effective services to children and young people in and moving on from the council's care.

Performance Information:

N/A

Equality and Diversity Impact:

The Corporate Parenting service is provided for children from across the Milton Keynes community. It therefore needs to provide interventions that can meet the diverse needs of the children and young people in the Council's care.

Recommendation(s):

1. That the report be noted
2. That the Panel investigate and identify the best ways to ensure that more Looked After Children and Care Leavers participate in Today's Children Tomorrow's Future meetings and events and note that discussions are ongoing about strategies to address this issue. (A proposal for a weekly Children in Care youth group has been made and it is hoped that a pilot project will commence in the near future. This will be discussed further in the next report.)

Full Report:

Since the last report TCTF members have undertaken activities in the following areas:

- i. **Care Leavers Week:** We arranged four events for Care Leavers Week for Children in Care and Care Leavers aged 14+.

We organised a housing consultation for Care Leavers to gather their views about housing provision, the process, support and what could be done to improve this for our care leavers. Regrettably this event was unattended. Discussions will take place about the reasons for this and efforts to extend the participation in these events are ongoing.

We held a Finance Day where young people explored various aspects of finance. This event has been held before and was found to be very useful. It was again well attended. Topics covered were: bills and budgeting; benefits and positives of employment; rights and entitlements; savings and accounts; educational finance.

Two young people attended the 'Taking it to the Next Level' event in London and thoroughly enjoyed it. On the day they were able to meet other young people involved in Children in Care Councils from around the country, get ideas for how to improve TCTF and identify aims and objectives for local improvements.

Finally we ran a food skills day. This is the first of its kind and was very well attended. Young people learnt about the importance of hygiene, how to cook a variety of dishes including a main course and pudding and how to keep themselves safe in the kitchen. This was very well received and something we would like to run again.

- ii. **E-safety Session:** This event was aimed at Foster Carers and Young People. The purpose of the session was for Foster Carers and Young People to learn about internet safety and raise awareness of both the benefits and the challenges of young people using the internet. It was intended that carers and young people would have the opportunity to trial some of the websites useful to the carers and young people around these issues. Unfortunately attendance was again an issue and the reasons for this are being explored as part of the wider issue of encouraging more Young People and their carers to participate in activities.

- iii. **National Takeover Day:** October saw the celebration of 'National Takeover Day'. This is a day set up by the Children's Commissioner to encourage children to 'take over' for the day. This year we provided many opportunities to children and young people across Milton Keynes Council. We explored the opportunity to observe Corporate Parenting Panel, but due to school and other commitments young people were unable to attend on this occasion.

The second opportunity we had was for Youth Cabinet to learn more about TCTF and being in care. We held a session with Youth Cabinet so they could better understand what it was like to be in care and how things may be different for Looked After Children when talking about their campaigns. Both Youth Cabinet and TCTF found this extremely useful and were keen to be

involved in further joint ventures.

We offered young people who are looked after and members of the Youth Cabinet an opportunity to learn about purposeful meetings. The session was divided into two parts. The first session was for Youth Cabinet members and Looked After Children to get together and discuss various types of meeting, what the purpose of meetings is, how to chair meetings and what makes a good or bad meeting. We then divided the group into Looked After Children and Youth Cabinet members. Those who were Looked After then discussed the process of reviews and how they might be able to chair their own reviews. The session was well attended and feedback indicated that young people found it extremely useful.

Throughout the week we asked young people: "If you could take over something for the day, what would it be and what would you do?" Individuals were interviewed on film exploring this question and the interviews were collated. On the Friday, the Youth Big Debate was held at MK Dons stadium. The film made by young people was shown at the event.

- iv. **Interview Training:** Further training was arranged around effective interviewing following on from previous sessions earlier in the year. The session was successful and feedback positive.
- v. **Interview Panels:** Following the training young people have been involved on the interview panel for recruitment to two MKC staff roles recently. One of the panels was working alongside other children from Youth Cabinet and Children in Need sector. Young people really enjoyed their involvement in the interviews as it was a new experience for many of them. Young people also really enjoyed working with children from other backgrounds.
- vi. **School Children in Care Council:** One TCTF member has set up Children in Care Council within their school which is proving very successful. All children in care at the school, including those looked after by other authorities, are invited to the group. They are currently working on organising an assembly to educate other young people in relation to being in care.
- vii. **Plans for True Triumph 2014:** TCTF members have been working hard to help organise True Triumph for next year. They have considered feedback from this year's event in relation to what worked well and what could be improved. They have so far confirmed the preferred location and discussed the most appropriate use of the allocated budget. They have also come up with a list of 'celebrities' they would like to invite to speak at the event.
- viii. **All Party Parliamentary Group:** Members of TCTF have recently attended the national All Party Parliamentary Group for children in care and care leavers. The topic was residential care and young people found the discussions very interesting.