

# **Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**8 November 2022**

## **Children & Young People's Participation Update**

### **1. Recommendation(s)**

- 1.1 The Committee note the positive contributions that children and young people (C&YP) have made to support improvements to WCC services.
- 1.2 The Committee note the changes to the Participation Team and expansion of responsibilities.
- 1.3 The Committee re-establish a Task & Finish Group on Mental Health & Wellbeing agreed prior to Covid, so members of the Youth Council, Forum for C&YP with SEND, Children in Care Council and Care Leaver Forum meet on a quarterly basis with 2-3 members of the C&YP OSC Subcommittee.
- 1.4 The Committee agree a rota where elected members attend bimonthly the Youth Council, Forum for C&YP with SEND, Children in Care Council and Care Leaver Forum.
- 1.5 The Committee agree that the Youth Council, Forum for C&YP with SEND, Children in Care Council and Care Leaver Forum will be invited to attend the C&YP OSC Subcommittee on an annual basis to present their annual report on the actions/achievements and key messages to members.

### **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1 The Committee received a report on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2019 resulting in the adoption of the Children and Young People's Participation and Engagement Strategy 2019-2023.
- 2.2 The Committee received a report on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2019 providing an overview and update on the Participation and Engagement of C&YP.
- 2.3 The Committee was due to receive a report on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2020, however, the Committee meeting was cancelled because of the public health crisis and lockdown. The report was received by the Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020. The report also considered the implications of Covid-19 on the progress of Participation and Engagement.
- 2.4 This update covers the period July 2021 to September 2022.

### 3. Financial Implications

3.1 There are no significant financial implications to consider at this stage.

### 4. Environmental Implications

4.1 There are no significant environmental implications to consider at this stage.

### 5. Supporting Information

#### 5.1 Overview

Over the last 3 years Children & Families have established an active and progressive Participation Team. In particular, the service has been able to change the culture and approach on how we engage, co-produce and listen to young people, moving the service from piece meal engagement to real listening and involvement of young people within services at a design and individual level. This is encompassed by the restorative practice approach of “**doing *with* rather than *to* or *for* people**”.

The Participation Team have been very successful mainly with **children in care and care experienced** young people. Children and Families want to build upon the strengths of these care experienced forums by widening the influence and success of the Participation Team.

#### ***New Participation Team***

The service has pulled together Participation with Children, Young People and Parents/Carers under one Participation Team. The team will now lead all participation across Children and Education Services. This includes:

- SEND - establishing a Forum for C&YP with SEND and supporting the SEND Parent/Carer Forum (from July 2021)
- Youth Council - universal young person's voice (from April 2022)
- Children in Care Council - focus on Warwickshire children in care up to the age of 16.
- Care Leaver Forum (including Young Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers) - for Warwickshire care experienced young people aged 16 plus.
- Parent/Carer Voice - our group of parents/carers (SGO, not foster carers) who have involvement with Early Help or Children's Social Care

A new structure is now in place (since April 2022) as follows.

- Operational Lead
- 3 Development Officers
- 3 Participation Support Officers

- 3 Apprentices

## 5.2 **Children in Care Council & Care Leavers Forums**

In July 2021 care experienced young people addressed a Children & Families conference of 600 staff and told the attendees that young people struggle most with the following 4 areas.

- getting regular consistent mental health support
- help with feeling isolated and alone
- having the right support (especially when becoming a parent)
- knowing and understanding their rights and entitlements

The Children in Care Council meet on the first Tuesday of each month. Their key contributions over the last year are described below.

### **a. Cross Ministerial Board Meeting Mon 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

Liss Phillips was invited by the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum to deliver an online presentation on the “Baby Box Project” to a Cross Ministerial Board. Liss Phillips was one of 2 young people delivering to Ministers on the theme of “Health Support” for care leavers.

Mark Riddell (National Implementation Advisors for Care Leavers) was also present at the Board meeting and later sent a communication to Nigel Minns (Director of People Group),

“Hi Nigel I do hope you are well. As you know I was on the call yesterday – I am a member of the Ministerial Board where Liss presented fabulously the Baby Box Project she is leading on. It was in front of Cabinet Office and Ministers. I wonder if I could arrange to come and spend the day in Warwickshire with Liss and others to see how your leaving care offer has shaped up.....”.

Isabelle Trowler, the Chief Social Worker of England also heard about this project and visited Warwickshire to hear more about this work.

“I must say, I was very taken with all that I heard. It's *social* action at its best.

Lauren is going to do a write up for Departmental colleagues and we will distribute some of this too, if that is ok? I will also make sure the Care Review Chair knows about my visit too, although I guess he may already have you on his radar.

Very best wishes and send my thanks to everyone again. I have cc'd in John.

Isabelle”

### ***b. Young Inspectors August/September 2021***

Young people carried inspection of 9 different Supported Accommodation venues over August and September 2021. The purpose of the visits was to review whether the accommodation venues being commissioned by WCC are fit for purpose.

The feedback was reported to the Performance and Quality Team within Commissioning. Young people were particularly concerned about the standards of one venue that they had inspected.

Following young people's feedback, Performance and Quality staff met with the venue to discuss improvements. Young people are pleased to report the positive changes to refit and upgrade the standard of the kitchen at the venue.



### ***c. Warwickshire Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government Youth Homelessness Visit - 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021***

Five young people met with the Homelessness Advice and Support Team (HAST) from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 5<sup>th</sup> October.

The young people's comments were as follows as presented by HAST in their feedback,

#### **“Young Advisers Comments:**

- The high rent in supported housing is a disincentive to working, and if in employment arrears can build up preventing move on – **it was suggested having a reduced rent towards the end of the stay in supported housing to enable a young person to work, save and achieve positive move on.** If a young person is out at work they are using less of the facilities/utilities and support on offer but paying the same.
- The different Allocation Policies in the DB's is confusing – **young people would like these to be clear and consistent.**
- Inspections of supported housing highlighted issues with:
  - Lack of staff training to provide the right advice to young people/gap in young people's knowledge of what is available to them.
  - Loneliness, increased by visitor restrictions.
  - Use of drugs in the premises and feeling unsafe in accommodation.
  - Being unable to work makes it feel both physically and mentally trapping.

- **A rent guarantor scheme available up to the age of 21 for care leavers was suggested.**
- Young Advisers were keen to have their voice heard by Ministers, **please share with them information on the [Youth Homelessness Parliament](#) where young people get the opportunity to present directly to the Minister for Housing. To find out more contact [tamzin.reynolds-rosser@stbasils.org.uk](mailto:tamzin.reynolds-rosser@stbasils.org.uk)**

“Can I once again thank all participants on the call on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021, it was great to see people again and hear from those for who this was their first time joining. In particular, I want to thank the five Young Advisers; Alisha, Umar, Ian, Liss and Demi, for their thoughtful, honest and very helpful contributions and great to hear how well everyone is doing and I am grateful to Shinderpaul for organising for us.” Jill Boak from HAST

***d. National Advisor for Care Leavers Visit - 19<sup>th</sup> October***

Mark Riddell, National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers, from DfE, visited Warwickshire at Portland House in Nuneaton on 19<sup>th</sup> October.

Mark Riddell was keen to learn about the progress that Warwickshire had made on the **Care Leavers Offer** and offered the following feedback post his visit.

“The recommendations are as follows:

1. Housing came across as a particular challenge and the need for more options for care leavers across the county.
2. A set of offers from each partner agency so that PA’s and care leavers are clear about what is on offer.
3. To consider expanding your multi-agency approach with key partners so that care leavers can access support in a ‘one stop’ approach.
4. To review your Council Tax offer in line with the letter sent from MHCLG that asks all LA’s to consider an offer up to 25yrs and that the exemption follows care leavers across LA (Local Authority) boundaries.
5. It would be good to see a leisure offer with a Plus 1 to care leavers up to 25yrs.

And finally, how well you have captured the voice of care leavers by engaging them in the co-production of their local offer is testament to your commitment to have an even better offer to care leavers.

Overall, what I heard and saw is a very strong offer to care leavers and I look forward to seeing you again in the new year.”

***e. Ofsted Inspection of Local Area Children’s Service 15<sup>th</sup> Nov – 26<sup>th</sup> Nov 2021***

As part of the Ofsted Inspection two meetings were held by inspectors with the Children in Care Council/Care Leavers Form on Weds 25<sup>th</sup> November and then with care experienced apprentices on Thurs 26<sup>th</sup> November.

The feedback from Inspectors was as follows,

- the inspectors wanted to pass on their thanks to all the young people they spoke to
- the inspectors said they were a vibrant bunch, and they said they could see how the young people are helping to make a real difference in Warwickshire
- the inspectors relayed back all the area of concerns the young people raised
- the inspectors have seen lots of CIC councils and Care leavers forums and mentioned that our group was really strong.

Participation was also identified as a strength by Inspectors.

A photo album covering 3 years of activities was put together by a care experienced apprentice to share with Ofsted Inspectors to help illustrate the scope and range of work undertaken with care experienced young people.

***f. National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum Awards & Full Council Recognition 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021***

Liss Phillips was nominated for 2 awards by the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum in October 2021 and won both awards. The awards were for Best Public Speaker 2021 & Champion of Champions 2021.

It is worth noting that these are the same awards that Umar Teerab won in 2020.

Liss Phillips was invited to Full Council meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> December to have her awards recognised by the Chair and Elected Members.

***g. Brothers & Sisters Event – 12<sup>th</sup> April 2022***

Improving contact and relationships between brothers and sisters was brought to the attention of the Children & Families Service Leadership Team by the Children in Care Council. This has led to some key developments.

A BBQ and Family Fun Day for brothers and sisters in care was hosted on Tues 12<sup>th</sup> April from 2-4pm, at Myton Park Offices.

The following activities were available for foster carers and young people to enjoy, Animal Man, BBQ, Ice cream van, Soft play area, Easter egg hunt, Cake sale, Arts & crafts – Bonnet Competition and Guess the “Teddys Name”.

Approximately 50 foster carers and young people attended on the day. Below are some comments sent by those who attended.

“Many many thanks for organising the Siblings day today. The three children that I brought thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon. They particularly liked the huge ice creams!”

“All three loved the soft play and looking at the animals”.

“It must have taken a lot of organising and I just wanted to let you know that it was much appreciated”.

“Most of all it was great to see her with her siblings enjoying this. We can't wait to see the group photo with her siblings which we will display in her bedroom”.

Furthermore, an online broadcast was planned for 27<sup>th</sup> June, 12-1pm, to promote workshops that staff could attend to learn more about working with brothers and sisters in care. These workshops took place on September 12<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>.

Finally, a survey has been carried out with staff who support brothers and sisters in care. A second survey has been sent out to brothers and sisters in care to help understand their experiences of being in care.

***h. Children & Families Conference & Watch Your Words – Improving Language in Care July 15<sup>th</sup> 2022***

Work has been undertaken over the last 6 months to co-produce a booklet with young people that sets out to promote the use of more positive language within the social care setting.

This booklet is titled “Watch Your Words” and is now complete.

The booklet was launched at the Children and Families staff conference on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

***i. Apprenticeship Guide for Care Experienced Apprentices 16+ August 2022***

Warwickshire has been instrumental in leading a subgroup which has co-produced a guide for the West Midlands Participation Leads Network with young people.

The guide explains how to support care experienced young people into apprenticeships and the guide has been promoted as good practice across 14 Local Authorities within the West Midlands Region.

***j. Connect + Go Project in Partnership with Volunteering Matters September 2022***

Volunteering Matters is a charity working in partnership with Warwickshire to deliver the Grandmentors Programme.

Volunteer Matters has been successful in securing a bid through the ‘Tackling Loneliness with Transport Fund’ granted by Department of Transport. Out of the 1000 bids the DoT received, 12 have been selected for a 12-month pilot project, and Warwickshire is one of them.

The plan is to have a small vehicle and a 9-seater minibus based in Nuneaton, which will provide free transport to young people who are care experienced. This is for ALL young people in care aged 16-25 including UASC.

The smaller vehicle will be providing local transport exclusively in Nuneaton, whereas the minibus will be used across Warwickshire and Coventry. Both will be resourced by community volunteer drivers. Both vehicles will be electric.

A start date for the project will be announced shortly.

### 5.3 **Work with Young Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers**

#### **a. Football on Sundays**

Football has been taking place every Sunday over the last year with Warwickshire's UASC young people. This activity has been taking place at Sydney Stringer School in Coventry from 12-1.30pm.

The activity attracts young people living in Birmingham, Coventry, and different parts of Warwickshire. Attendance has ranged from 25-40 young people.

Young people have played the UASC team from Milton Keynes on 31<sup>st</sup> July and 16<sup>th</sup> October. Young people also entered a tournament for care experienced young people organised by Solihull on 17<sup>th</sup> September. Plans are afoot to play the Police and Fire Services in the new year.

#### **b. Allotment & BBQ fortnightly**

3 further planting beds have been created by young people this year. This makes a total of 6 planting beds. 3 have been functional over the 2021 summer period with young people being keen to be involved.

Seating benches have been bought and have been painted and decorated by young people. This work was led by a care experienced apprentice.

Young people have been growing tomatoes, courgettes, broad beans and peas. This produce is used at a fortnightly BBQ and has been given to young people to take home and cook.

Funding for this project had been secured through West Midlands Region Children Services.

#### **c. Relationship & Sex Education Workshops**

A series of workshops have been delivered by a care experienced young person on Relationships & Sex Education for young asylum seekers. The workshops are delivered in different languages, for example Kurdish, Afghan, Eritrean and Sudanese.

The purpose of the workshop is to support young asylum seekers to explore different cultural norms. Workshops were delivered in Birmingham on.

- 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> March 18 young people
- 8 & 9<sup>th</sup> June 19 young people
- 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> October

Future dates planned for delivering workshops are,

- 7<sup>th</sup> December & 8<sup>th</sup> December



#### **d. Pilot Mental Health Workshops 9<sup>th</sup> August**

Working in partnership with the NHS a member of the Participation Team developed a workshop to support young people to understand how stress, worry and anxiety can impact on the human body, for example on sleep.

In addition, there are techniques offered and practised with young people to encourage them to become more resilient in managing difficult emotional situations. Young people also receive a wellbeing bag.

The first workshop was delivered on 9<sup>th</sup> August with 21 young people in attendance. Future workshops are planned.

#### **e. Refugee Celebration Week 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

Each year in June, a national Refugee Celebration Week takes place to celebrate the contributions refugees make to UK society. This year on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022, over 100 young people seeking asylum, professionals and foster carers attended an event at the Heart of England Conference Centre, in Fillongley.

Young people were recognised for various achievements in a presentation of awards ceremony during the evening, including the UASC of the Year Award presented to Eliza Michar. The evening also involved sharing a meal together, socialising together, a performance by a young person and live music to dance to.

The attendees also viewed the first of the three films young people helped create at the event "My Experiences of Arriving into the UK".

#### **f. Professional Event 3 Short Films 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022**

A film maker was commissioned to produce 3 films interviewing young asylum seekers. The focus of the film is on how young people experience arriving in the UK, the support they receive and what it has been like for them to integrate within the UK.

The film maker filmed interviews and activities that young people had been taking part in over the last year.

An event for professionals took place at Northgate House on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June to launch the 3 films as a training tool for staff, foster carers and for new arrivals of young people into the UK.

Funding for this project had been secured through West Midlands Region Children Services.

#### **5.4 Warwickshire Youth Council & Area Forums**

The responsibility for supporting the Warwickshire Youth Council moved to the Participation Team in April 2022. Existing members of the Youth Council had agreed to extend their term of office until the next Youth Council Elections in 2024 (elections take place every two years in line with British Youth Council

advice). Planning is underway to organise online elections with schools in 2024.

Staff are currently recruiting young people through secondary schools in the interim to increase the numbers of young people participating in both the Youth Council and Area Forums. The Youth Council is being promoted with all secondary schools over Oct/Nov/Dec 2022. Early next year it is anticipated that young people will also start to engage with the West Midlands Combined Authority.

In Spring 2021, children and young people across Warwickshire shared their views in a Child Friendly Warwickshire survey. Young people told us that what matters to them most are the following,

- climate change
- mental health
- careers
- respectful relationships
- youth homelessness

The Youth Council along with other youth forums facilitated a conference based on these themes.

**a. Warwickshire Youth Conference – Future Ready 21<sup>st</sup> April**

The Youth Conference took place on 21<sup>st</sup> April at the Woodland Grange Conference Centre, from 11 to 4pm.

- 99 young people registered for the event
- 76 attended

“I got back earlier from the conference and just wanted to thank all involved. I had a brilliant day! Please pass my best wishes to everyone involved (can’t wait for the next one!)” From a young person.

“My daughter (and her friend) had a brilliant day today thank you so much. She loved the lunch and the hot chocolate at break. The relationship workshop was brilliant and she has come home with so many goodies. Not to forget and amazing life like caricature. Thanks so much for organising!” From a Mum

“It was a striking and impressive event, and I can see a lot of future in it. Well done!” David Mond, Warwickshire Climate Alliance.

“It was great to be part of it and to see so many young people there. I hope this can be a yearly event”. Chris Stephens, Prospects

“It was a lovely event yesterday and great to be a part of it!” Jennifer Shergill, Kooth

“It was great to see so many young people there, well organised and run”. Kerry Hansard, St. Basils

“Young people engaged really well and seemed to enjoy the day”. Loz Grinnell Targeted Youth Support

 EQIP  
@EquipEquality1

So pleased to be at the Warwickshire Youth Conference 2022 with partners, hearing from very inspiring young people and the future leaders of our communities across Warwickshire! @Warwickshire\_CC @WarwickshirePCC @Child\_Works @seccombephilip @P3Warwickshire @lifespacetrust @TheRSC



Following the conference a short 3-minute video was created and along with a conference report with recommendations.

#### ***b. Youth Council Meetings***

The Youth Council meet on the first Thursday of each month. The Youth Council have been working on promoting a video for young people on Mental Health and promoting a video on politics. The Youth Council have also met with staff to discuss the Levelling UP Agenda, Support to Young Carers and promotional videos on Mental Health for young people.

### **5.5 Parent Carer Forum and Forum for Young People with SEND**

The responsibility for supporting these forums moved to the Participation Team in July 2021.

#### ***a. Warwickshire Parent Carer Voice***

A gradually improving relationship has been nurtured with The Warwickshire Parent Carer Forum over the last year, with parent carers from the Forum indicating that they are “cautiously optimistic” about future working relationships with WCC, following the Pilot SEND Ofsted Inspection (from 13<sup>th</sup> June to 1<sup>st</sup> July).

A Live Feedback Form has been created to enable parent carers to feedback on their experience of services. Feedback has also been collated through webinars that have been made available to parent carers to share information and raise questions.

Training for staff members within SEND on Restorative Practices and Co-Production has been underway to help further improve experiences of parent carers who come into contact with SEND services.

***b. Forum for young people with SEND***

This area has taken a little longer to establish given the diversity of young people and the importance of accommodating individual needs of young people. Young people can lack confidence, find some environments difficult manage, feel anxiety, need a quiet space and so on. These are practical challenges that need careful consideration and planning.

A quiet space was offered to young people at the Youth Conference event on 21<sup>st</sup> April.

A forum for young people with SEND called IMPACT now meets on the third Thursday of each month.

Recently, IMPACT held an event at a Leamington venue to look at young people's priorities. We are currently waiting on a report from KIDs charity on the key findings.

## **6. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps**

- 6.1 Promote and increase membership of IMPACT the forum for young people with SEND.
- 6.2 Promote and increase membership of Children in Care and Care Leavers which are now to split into 2 separate forums.
- 6.3 Promote and increase the membership of the Youth Council via secondary schools.
- 6.4 Recruit and induct a participation role to create a framework for the voice of young people to be heard within Police and Youth Justice services

## **Appendices**

- 1. Warwickshire Youth Council Conference Report April 21<sup>st</sup> 2022

## **Background Papers**

- 1. Children & Young People's Participation & Engagement Strategy 2019-2023
- 2. Children & Young People's Participation & Engagement Strategy 2019-2023, Children & Young People's Scrutiny Committee 15<sup>th</sup> January 2019
- 3. Children & young People's Presentation on Participation, Children & Young People's Scrutiny Committee 12<sup>th</sup> March 2019

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