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Officer

Children in Care Council Update Quarter 1 2021/22

Purpose

1.1 Children in Care Council Summary

There have been three virtual meetings of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) since the last report, April, May and June 2021:

- I. At the April meeting, the Participation Officer introduced herself to the group. Guest speaker, the Deputy Head of Service for Children's Quality Assurance attended to gather feedback on the Diversity and Heritage Pledge. A discussion took place around the numbers attending the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and the frequency of the meetings.
- II. In the May meeting, the Participation Officer informed the group about the Big Ask survey, what it was and why it is important to be involved. An email with further information and the link to complete this was sent to all members after the meeting. The Participation Officer gave feedback of the results from the Covid consultation which went out earlier this year.
- III. At the June meeting, the Participation Officer presented a PowerPoint presentation to members highlighting the different services for Looked After Children. This was to generate a discussion around topics they would like to discuss at future meetings.

- 1.2 This report highlights the work the Children in Care Council (CiCC) have been doing, what is important to them and how they impact on services. It also explains the challenges they face which Corporate Parenting Committee may be able to help with.

Recommendation

- 2.1 To consider the content of the report and feedback from CiCC.

Reason

- 3.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee need to know that the CiCC is being run well. It provides information and evidence that the voices of the children and young people in care are being heard and having a direct influence on services. The report also ensures that the voice of young people is heard at the Corporate Parenting Committee.

Supporting information

- 4.1 At the CICC in April, the new Participation Officer introduced herself and spoke to the group about undertaking a new drive to encourage new members for the CICC. The Participation Officer asked the members for their thoughts on engagement and how to encourage new members to the group. The members suggested a change of venue, more fun activities and going into Residential Homes to promote the CICC. It was also suggested to have more days out like Whitehall or the House of Commons.
- 4.2 The Deputy Head of Service for Children's Quality Assurance presented the Derby City Council Diversity and Heritage Pledge for Looked After Children which is currently in draft stage, and expressed wishes for the CICC to help refresh the pledge. The Children and Young People were asked their thoughts on the Pledge's name. Their feedback was positive.

The Children and Young People were asked that the following questions were distributed for CICC Members to feedback in their own time:

- **What are your thoughts on the Pledge's name?**
- **Are the 5 areas of the Pledge appropriate? Could they be improved?**
- **What ways do you think that the Corporate Parent could improve your care?**

The Deputy Head of Service for Children's Quality Assurance informed the CICC that once the draft is finalised, the Pledge will be approved at the Corporate Parenting Meeting.

A member expressed that they would like the pledge to be made clearer and asked for reassurance about what training workers will receive relating to the Pledge. They were assured that actions in the Pledge are already in place, but more training is being rolled out regarding diversity in areas such as culture, language, and religion.

- 4.3 In the May meeting, the Participation Officer presented the Wellbeing Mission Statement for the CICC which was created and distributed before meeting. The CICC members were asked to give feedback on changes they would like to make to ensure this was tailored to the needs of the group.

4.4 The Big Ask survey was explained to the members. The Participation Officer then emailed information with a link to participate to all members, Residential Homes, in addition to Early Help and Social Care Service Managers, asking them to disseminate to staff to encourage and support participation in this. The closing date for this survey is 28th May 2021. Following evaluation of the returns nationally, the outcome and proposed next steps will be reported to CICC and Corporate Parenting.

4.5 The Children in Care and Care Leavers consultation to capture their views during lockdown was distributed during February 2021 to the following groups:

- Internal and External Foster Carers,
- DCC Childrens Residential Homes,
- Care Leavers
- Supported Accommodation providers
- Young People remanded in custody

The take up was low therefore the deadline was extended to 31 March 2021. The consultation findings were fed back to the group by the Participation Officer. The main areas were:

- There were 50 responses in total; 43 were CIC, 6 were Care Leavers and 1 was not specified.
- How well do you feel Derby City Council kept you informed at the start of lockdown: 71% (34) answered OK, Good or Excellent, 30% (14YP) answered Poor or Very Poor.
- Did you have contact with your Social Worker or Personal Advisor at the start – 71% said yes and 27% said no.
- 69% felt like their questions were answered, 26% felt like some were answered, 6% felt like they were not answered.
- Did you have contact with your IRO: 86% said yes and 14% said no
- How would you rate the help and support of your IRO: 50% (3) said Excellent or Good, 33% (2) said Average and 17% said Very Poor (1 Young Person).
- At the start of lockdown, most felt unsure, worried & anxious but some felt happy.
- At the time of the third lockdown, most were feeling better and safe, with some feeling worried at the end.
- Some individual concerns were raised around social workers and contact with family members when social mixing wasn't allowed.

The Participation Officer has sent the findings via email to the Head of Service for Early Help and Social Care to feedback comments from the consultation and ascertain what actions will be taken.

4.6 In June, the Participation Officer presented a PowerPoint Presentation detailing the services which affect children in care. This was to generate discussion around which topics the members would like to cover that are important to them. The following three topics were highlighted by members as areas they would like to explore:

- Leaving Care with regards to support and Pathway Plans
- Permanency of placements and a reduction in unplanned moves
- Creative Mentors

4.7 The CICC members were sent the Children in Care Pledge to review prior to the June CICC meeting. This was to ask them to give feedback on what they think works well within it, what doesn't happen and what needs to happen going forward. The members agreed they were happy with the content as it stands.

The possible relaunching of the Pledge was discussed at the meeting. Mainly looking at ways of raising awareness of the Pledge which included conducting telephone questionnaires and a suggestion for a COVID secure effort to spread the word about the Pledge and CICC in public spaces. The Participation Officer informed the group of training days with DCC and new social workers and the members agreed this could be a good platform to do so and were happy to be a part of the relaunch.

4.8 The Participation Officer suggested having an activity day in the summer holidays for members to get together. This would also be offered to other CYP in Care as a promotion of the CICC and to increase engagement. It was discussed about the current limitations and difficulties booking something such as Laser Quest with larger numbers, members explored the possibility of Outdoor Activities such as Lea Green which would also be more interactive. All members agreed and would like to do this if possible. The Participation Officer will investigate this proposal and feedback to the members at the next CICC.

4.9 The meetings for CICC from September 2021 are to be held face to face at the Council House at the request of the CICC members. This will allow the members to undertake different activities, eat together and socialise. This will hopefully encourage other young people to join the group.

- 4.10 The Participation Officer co-produced the following ways to increase engagement in the CICC along with the Head of Virtual schools, Deputy Head of Fostering and Head of Direct services and Childrens residential services.
From September the Participation Officer will attend schools to meet with Children in care working together with Designated Teachers for CiC
- Working with the Virtual School to meet with CYP at activities such as cookery sessions
 - Attending Foster Carer Support Group to speak about the CICC and promote
 - Meet with CYP in foster placements individually where necessary to gain their views
 - Connect individually with CYP under the care of Derby City Council but placed out of area
 - A review of how we consult with our members who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities to ensure their views are captured in an inclusive and effective way.

5.1 **Care Leavers Update**

A meeting was held between the Commissioning Manager for Participation and the Service Manager for Leaving Care to discuss how to proceed with the Care Leavers Forum. It was agreed this would sit with the Leaving Care Service with assistance from the Children in Care Participation Officer. The Leaving Care Service are going to attend the next CICC meeting in order to discuss the way in which the young people coming up to leaving care would prefer to be consulted.

Public/stakeholder engagement

- 6.1 As outlined in this report.

Other options

- 7.1 Nothing to note for this period.

Financial and value for money issues

- 8.1 None noted.

Legal implications

- 9.1 None noted.

Climate implications

- 10.1 None

Other significant implications

- 11.1 None

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal		
Finance	Janice Hadfield, Head of Finance	24.06.2021
Service Director(s)		
Report sponsor	Gurmail Nizzer, Director, Integrated Commissioning	24.06.2021
Other(s)	Alice Sanghera, Acting Head of Integrated Commissioning, Children & Young People	24.06.2021
Background papers:	n/a	
List of appendices:	n/a	