

# **The Children In Care Council Review April 2016**

## **Children in Care Council Derby**

### **What is the CICC and what are its objectives?**

The CICC is for all children and young people with care experience. The CICC highlight issues affecting children & young people who are 'looked after'. It provides a platform where young people may speak about things that matter to them & contribute towards positive changes benefitting all. The views of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) are used to influence the delivery and design of services to improve outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

### **General Meetings**

In Derby the CICC is facilitated by Volunteering Matters. The CICC members are highly motivated and committed to improving the lives of all looked-after young people from Derby City. They meet monthly at their base in the College Business Centre. The meetings are fun & functional. The CICC dine together, catch up then discuss matters that are important to them. Meetings have a structure, designed to enhance skills and to be child friendly. Each meeting adopts the same process:

- Meetings follow an agenda so all present understand what the meeting is about and when things will happen;
- Children and Young people decide together what matters & what needs to change;
- CICC agree on and invite guests - if they feel they may have opportunities or information that could be useful
- CICC plan events, activities, trips & training that are fun & useful to them

The young people take turns to chair the meeting, be welcome members or to assist with refreshments. Meetings are lively and purposeful. Minutes are taken and distributed by post or email.

The CICC are actively involved in shaping the looked after children strategy for Derby City, they are consulted by their corporate parent in the design and delivery of services for looked after children and care leavers. Through open discussions and careful listening at meetings, issues are identified and are then promoted. This is achieved by inviting senior leaders to hear issues raised by the CICC. This ensures effective communication across the services, with the principle aim of improving the experience and outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. Recent guests have included:

**Councillor Sara Bolton** Cabinet Member for Safeguarding and Children and Young People

**Andy Smith** Strategic Director Children and Young People | People's Directorate

**Alice Sanghera** Commissioning Manager Children and Young People Commissioning Team

**Maureen Darbon** Acting Service Director for Early Help and Children's Social Care

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**Pervez Akhtar** Corporate Parenting Lead

**Naomi Feldman** DSCB Training Coordinator

**Heather Hartness** on behalf of fostering training

**Graeme Ferguson** Virtual head teacher

**Lisa Judson** Plus One Coordinator

### Future Guests will include:

**Lesley Smales** Service Line Manager and Designated Nurse for Children in Care (May 2016)

**Jonie Centro** MAT Centre Manager (June 2016)

**Youth Mayor** (September 2016)

**Rod Jones** Head of Residential Care

**Sajda Kausar** Public Health Community Engagement Manager

**Police commissioner**

**Independent Reviewing Officers**

## **The CICC & the Corporate Parenting Committee**

Derby City Council CICC is well established and constitutes a small group of dedicated young people between the age of 12 – 22. The group is diverse; reflecting the diversity of looked after children and care leavers of Derby City. The group is facilitated by Volunteering Matters, risk assessments are carried out to ensure all children are able to participate safely.

Partnership working with the Corporate Parenting Committee is critical if the CICC is to achieve its purpose. Currently the CICC are represented at Corporate Parenting Committee by Volunteering Matters staff. This is a matter to be reviewed and developed.

Having researched the practice of other local authorities, and particularly comments made by Ofsted – in order to raise the profile of the CICC and demonstrate the genuine commitment held by the Corporate Parenting Committee - VM wish to consult both regarding the current and future relationship between them. Trust, respect and good humour sit at the heart of all positive working relationships - with this in mind, we wish to seek the views of both for suggestions as to how we can continue to develop the role of the CICC in the committee and raise their profile generally. Suggestions may include:

Sports match social care professionals v CICC and other looked after children

CICC attendance at Corporate Parenting committee for an awards ceremony

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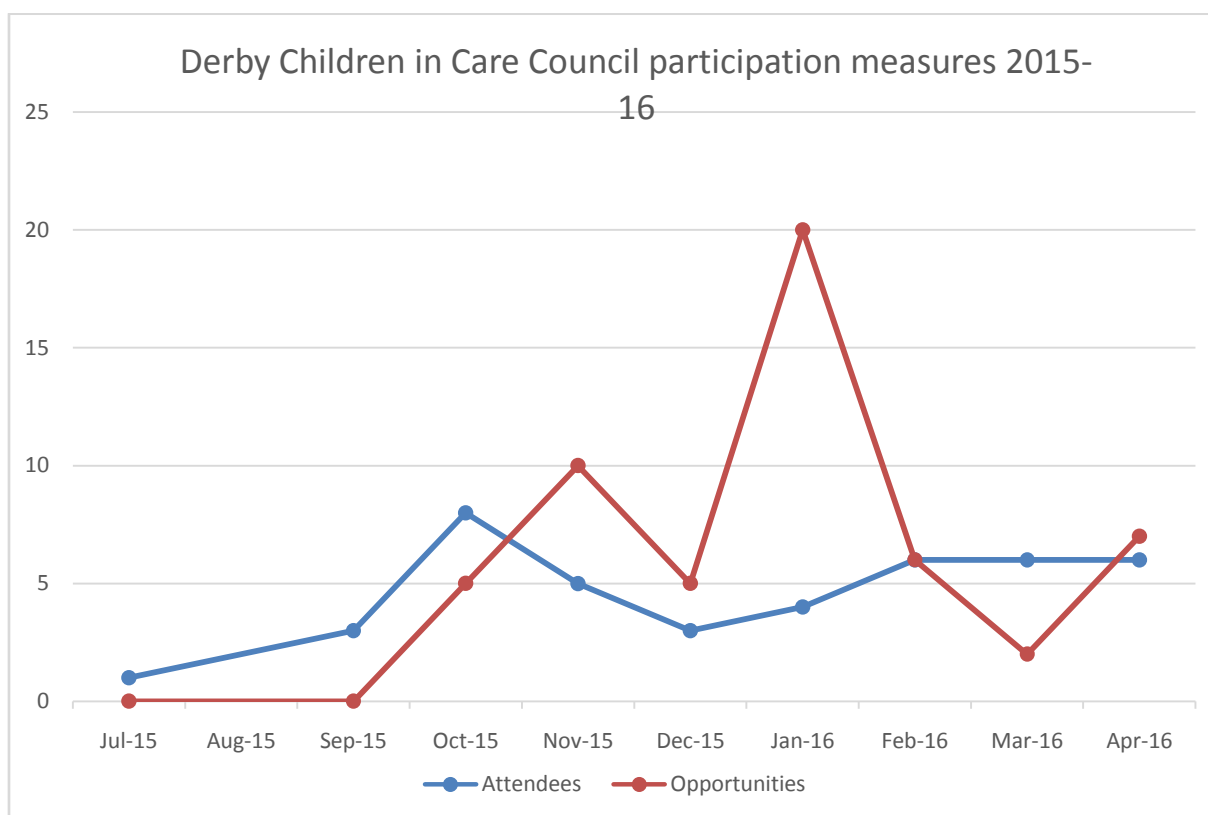
CICC & Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Dinner

CICC host the Corporate Parenting Committee – “Come Dine With me”

Develop “Total Respect Training” to be shared with the committee

### The Core Group - Existing Members

Attendance at the CICC regular meetings does fluctuate but has stabilized during the last quarter – opportunities have significantly increased due to collaborative working with the corporate parent. Opportunities attract interest from additional young people enhancing the work carried out by core members.



The core members work well and respectfully together, each member participates in meetings, the members are comfortable and are able to share personal experiences for the advantage of all. One young person recently said “it makes me feel calm”. Derby’s CICC are all excellent ambassadors and actively encourage other young people to attend their meetings. However, it is important to recognise barriers young people may face preventing participation. Barriers might be lack of confidence / fear of the unknown, not knowing other attendees / misunderstanding of purpose / information deliberately withheld time/location of meetings / transport issues.

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### How does Derby compare?

It is recognised that numbers appear low and therefore the corporate parent may ask whether the current CICC membership is reflective of Derby's looked after children. Recruiting additional members is an on-going task. However, it is thought provoking to compare our own CICC with comparative local authorities; having made telephone enquiries of some, the findings are:

Bolton Metropolitan: 3 members occasionally 4

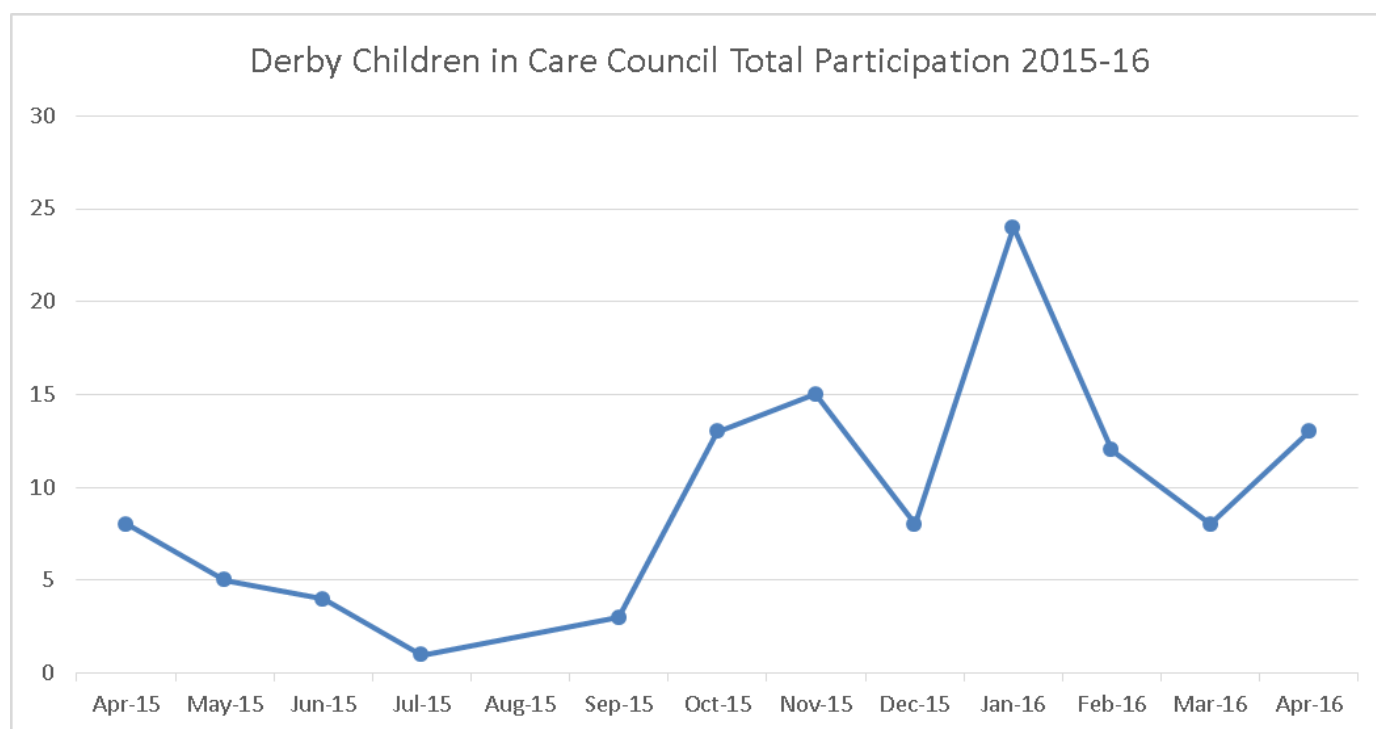
Sheffield City Council: 7 members

Leeds City Council: 7 members

Medway Council: 15 members - meeting quarterly

Thus: when combining all recent engagement, Derby fare's very well;

	Apr-15	May-15	Jun-15	Jul-15	Sep-15	Oct-15	Nov-15	Dec-15	Jan-16	Feb-16	Mar-16	Apr-16
Total Participation and Opps	8	5	4	1	3	13	15	8	24	12	8	13



### Communication methods to increase membership

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Effective, regular and consistent communication is essential to build on our success and encourage commitment and engagement with existing and new members. All staff at Volunteering Matters work to ensure that young people are kept informed and updated about developments and opportunities. This is achieved via emails, telephone calls, face to face meetings and visits, including young people “dropping in” at our office base. Furthermore we utilise the other methods of communication at our disposal;

### **Independent Visitors**

Independent visitors meet with their young person at least monthly, sometimes twice a month. We hold a database of contact details for all 40 independent visitors. Each time a participation opportunity arises; this is communicated with the volunteers to be cascaded to their young person. To develop this further, where appropriate, we will email the CICC agenda to be shared with their young person.

### **Advocacy Clinics**

Since September 2015, volunteer advocates have held open clinics at all residential children’s homes in Derby on a monthly basis. During these meetings, advocates discuss with young people present opportunities facilitated by the Children In Care Council and encourage attendance.

### **Mailshot**

Information is posted to all looked after children age ten + advertising meetings and participation opportunities. The envelopes are addressed personally to the young people.

### **Residential Children’s Homes**

Volunteering Matters have attended all children’s homes to promote and explain about the Children’s Rights Service to staff members. Details publicising participation events and general meetings are emailed to children’s homes as they arise. There is ongoing dialogue and liaison with home staff to help promote participation.

### **Focus on us**

A quarterly newsletter is sent to each Derby City looked after child over the age of 9 years to promote services. This includes an invitation to join the CICC. Young people are encouraged to participate virtually if they are unable to attend in person via email.

### **The Children’s Rights Service**

All staff are committed to encouraging attendance at the CICC. Consequently, when a referral is received staff share information about the CICC with foster carers, social workers and young people.

### **Foster Carers& Living in Foster Care - Introduction**

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VW have attended team meetings for the Foster Care social workers to promote the Children's Rights Service – including the Children in Care Council. The young people will participate in the foster carers training later this quarter. The CICC has been promoted within the information booklet.

### **Social Workers**

We have secured the opportunity to promote the Children's Rights Service & Children in Care Council at training for new social workers – this will commence in April and be a regular occurrence.

### **Virtual members**

It isn't always possible for young people to attend meetings– not least because many are placed out of area. It is important that these young people are able to effectively participate making known their feelings or views on any given subject. VM promote participation for virtual members by emailing the minutes and agenda for each meeting and inviting their comments.

## **It's not all work - Activities / Participation Events**

In order to enhance social skills, promote interests and ensure the time together is fun; we seek enrichment activities which build self-esteem, support learning and encourage young people to feed back about their experiences of care. Recent examples of this have included working closely with Plus One to develop opportunities of interest for the young people; attending Mega Zone, visiting the theatre and in preparation for the presentation of the Pledge, dining together at a local restaurant.

## **How have we made a difference?**

The CICC are proud of their achievements, through hard work and dedication the young people have:

- Re-written the Pledge & will work with Derby City Council to help achieve these goals
- Helped with social worker training
- Provided feedback to Derby about their residential Children's homes
- Designed their own logo & decided where and when meetings are held
- Campaigned for Internet Access to Children's Homes
- Created an information DVD on life in care
- Met with other CICC to share their views on what matters
- Provided feedback about services & changes that need to happen
- Campaigned for a One Page Profile for social workers to be given to all looked after children
- Consulted on the new framework for residential and foster care

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- NHS consultation regarding their experience of health services

### **In Conclusion**

The existing Children in Care Council is comprised of a dedicated group of young people encouraging others to get involved is an on going matter. In addition to the approach already adopted, VM wish to hold three social events annually to reach out to the wider audience of foster carers and their families, building relationships with younger children to secure attendance in later years. Recognising that young people communicate by social media is also a matter under constant review and something to be considered. Finally, great emphasis and focus should be placed on the achievements of the existing Children In Care Council, Volunteering Matters are proud to be associated with them.

Prepared by

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Coordinator Children's Rights Service

