

Appendix A

Children in Care Council Annual Report for 2011/12.

Priority Updates

The Children in Care Council (CiCC) identified their priorities for 2011 and continue to work towards them. These are –

- Children in Care Council Meetings
- Links to Corporate Parenting Panel
- Consultation Events
- Central Bedfordshire Council Consultation
- Recruitment and training of Social Workers and Foster Carers
- Awards Evening
- School Holiday Activity Programme / Activity Based Participation
- Training for Social Work Students with the University of Bedfordshire and Step Up to Social Work Programme
- Information Packs for Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- Newsletter for Children in Care
- Website
- Fun Day / Consultation Day
- Residential Trip for members of the CiCC

Children in Care Council Meetings

The CiCC meet on a monthly basis and has seven core group members with a further four young people who will be attending future CiCC meetings and the away day, which will take place during February half term. The ages of these young people range from 15-22; they attend meetings as and when their personal circumstances allow.

The members of the CiCC continue to promote the work of the CiCC and continue to try to recruit more young people to attend the meetings.

Activity based participation and consultation groups.

Members of the CiCC attend activity based participation groups and facilitate informal consultations feeding back information to the Participation Officer or support workers. Recently, young people raised concerns with regards to semi independent accommodation options and the support that is offered. Through feedback to managers the Leaving Care Team are to meet with current providers, alongside the commissioning team, to consider the range of support for young people.

The summer activities programme.

One member of the CiCC supported the Summer Activities Programme; this enabled this member to be part of discussions with younger Looked After Children. During these activities there were a number of discussions around the adoption process and how it works. There were also discussions between young people about being in care and what their experiences are. The CiCC member has been able to feed this information back to the CiCC, managers and the Participation Officer.

Links to the Corporate Parenting Panel

The CiCC meets with the Corporate Parenting Panel three times a year as agreed in the CiCC Priorities. The CiCC have presented their priorities to the new members of the Corporate Parenting Panel. During the last meeting members of the CiCC worked with members of the Corporate Parenting Panel to create kites to represent, 'What makes a good Corporate Parent?' and 'How can we improve the services for children and young people in care in Central Bedfordshire?' These kites were then displayed at the awards evening. This work is collated and will be used to influence service provision.

Members of the CiCC have met with Richard Carr, Chief Executive and Edwina Grant, Director of Children's Services. These meetings take place twice per year and are an opportunity for the CiCC members to share information on the work of the CiCC. The latest meeting took place during the February half term.

The CiCC have regular meetings with the Assistant Director to discuss their priorities and any issues that have been raised with the CiCC. Members of the CiCC are able to request additional meetings with the Assistant Director, for example, following a meeting with the Department for Education a young person representing the CiCC was asked to complete templates. The young person thought it would be helpful to go through this template with the Assistant Director and they worked through the templates together discussing each point.

Consultation Events

Members of the CiCC attended the regional CiCC meetings organised by the Department for Education and gave feedback on what it is like to be a looked after child or a care leaver in Central Bedfordshire. These meetings are organised twice a year; one of the meetings was attended by the Children's Rights Director and a representative for the Children's Minister, Tim Loughton.

Eastern Region NHS organised a consultation event on Looked After Children (LAC) Health assessments, during the February half term and four young people from Central Bedfordshire Council's CiCC attended.

- **Central Bedfordshire Council Consultation**

Members of the CiCC have taken part in consultation events with workers from the NHS and the Fostering Team. They also took part in the consultation for the 'All Age Skills Strategy' and met with the Assistant Director and were consulted on the Leaving Care Financial Policy.

- **Recruitment and Training of Social Workers and Foster Carers**

CiCC members are part of the training programme for foster carers, attending one Saturday per month, to deliver training on 'What makes a good foster carer?' Members of the CiCC are then able to give feedback on the prospective foster carers attending the training. This information is then used within the prospective foster carer's assessment and during panel discussions.

CiCC members have been part of the recruitment process for Personal Advisers, Deputy Managers and the Participation Support Worker. Three young people were also part of the interview panel for the contract for Independent Visitors and Advocates.

Members of the CiCC will be developing a half day work shop for Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSW), which will be delivered in March and will become part of the training programme.

Annual Awards Evening

There were over 130 nominations for this year's Achievement Awards, 60 children and young people received their award at the event which was held on Thursday 27 October 2011. Councillor Mark Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services, presented the awards to all the young people who attended. Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel, along with a number of social workers / personal advisers, foster carers and other professionals attended to celebrate the achievements of our looked after children and care leavers.

There were some overall winners at the event which included the Young Person of the Year, Special Awards for Educational Achievement and one for a young person with Outstanding Talent. A member of the CiCC also received an award for supporting other young people in care by volunteering her time to support the Summer Activities Programme.

The CiCC worked hard to organise the event and were pleased with the number of people who attended this year 'This is the second year that we have helped to organise the awards evening and it is really nice that we get to see so many children and young people receive their award.' CiCC Member.

Excellent feedback was received from young people, carers, CBC workers, Councillors and professionals from other agencies on the success of the event.

Activity Based Participation Groups

There have been a number of activities organised for looked after children between the ages of 8 – 15. There were two days organised in the Easter holidays and then eight days of activities were organised during the summer holidays. There were thirty three children who attended at least one of the activity days. The activities allow children to socialise with other young people in care; there were a number of children who used the activities as a way of making friends and offering support to each other with regards to being in care. Discussions that took place were supported by workers; some of these discussions were around the adoption process, being in care, sibling contact and school.

There were two days of activities which were funded through the Youth Support Team and three days funded through the British Horse Society who offered free pony days to looked after children aged between 8 and 12.

There have been a number of activity days organised for young people over the age of 16, which allow young people to take part in fun activities as well as giving members of the CiCC the opportunity to talk to other young people about the work of the CiCC. Members of the CiCC are then able to invite young people to be part of the CiCC. For example, following the Christmas meal that was attended by fifteen young people and supported by members of the Leaving Care Team, three young people have put their names forward to be part of the CiCC.

The Activity Based Participation Group also allows young people to develop relationships with their allocated worker in an informal setting and also with workers in the Looked After Children & Leaving and After Care Team.

The 'Aim Higher' team organised a residential trip which took place during June half term and two members of the CiCC attended. The focus of the residential trip was to develop independence skills and the feedback from young people was positive.

Work with the University of Bedfordshire & Step Up to Social Work Programme

Members of the CiCC have worked with the University of Bedfordshire and developed workshops for social work students. Members of the CiCC attended a training day organised by the University. Feedback from the University has been very positive. Young people will also be part of the interview process for the degree programme.

Three members of the CiCC have also been part of the assessment centre and interviews for the Step Up to Social Work programme. Each young person received a certificate and positive feedback. The Step Up to Social Work programme coordinators have requested further input from the CiCC.

Information Packs for Looked After Children and Care Leavers

The information packs for looked after children are now complete, the distribution of the packs has commenced. There have been a number of difficulties with the quality of the design of the packs which meant there was a significant delay in their production.

Members of the CiCC have now started work on the information packs for Care Leavers.

Newsletter to Children in Care

The CiCC have started the newsletter for children in care, these newsletters will be sent out twice per year and will share information about the work of the CiCC.

Fun Day / Consultation Day

Members of the CiCC have started to organise the fun day which will take place in the forthcoming summer holidays and the day will be open to all children and young people who are receiving a service from Central Bedfordshire Council.

Website for Children in Care

Members of the CiCC have had a number of discussions around social networking sites and using these to promote the work of the CiCC. Representatives of the CiCC have stated that there is also a need for a specific web site where information about being in care in Central Bedfordshire can be found specifically for looked after children.

Residential Trip for Members of the CiCC

The residential trip has not taken place, members of the CiCC will be discussing this further during their CiCC meeting. The original plan was for young people to take part in team building activities as well as CiCC activities. Some members may not be able to attend due to their personal circumstances. Team building days and days out have been organised to reward young people for their work with the CiCC.

Participation Support Worker

An additional Participation Support Worker has recently been appointed, on a three month contract and has been in post since January. They are working two days per week in Participation focusing on the Participation Groups for children in need and children subject to a Child Protection Plan.

A programme has been developed with the Family Support Team in Biggleswade which will involve an activity based day followed by four separate focus sessions looking at the role of the social worker and the services the child or young person have received. Following the last session a presentation evening will take place which will include parents and social workers. Invites will also be sent to the Head of Service and Assistant Director. The programme will then be organised with the Family Support Team in Dunstable. Evaluations will be written following the programmes to assist with service development.

The Participation Support Worker has also been supporting the Participation Officer in consulting children and young people subject to child protection plans and the Looked After Child Review process.

The Participation Support Worker has also been involved in –

- CiCC support – during meetings, recruitment and training of new CiCC members and activity days.
- University of Bedfordshire / Step Up to Social Work
- Youth Support Meetings – support with Independent Living Skills workshop
- Foster Carer and Social work training – support with attending and development of the training programme.

Participation Officer Work Plan

Included at the end of this report is the work plan of the Participation Officer which has the latest updates on the work being carried out with CiCC.

If resources allow, the Participation Service could develop focus groups offered to include Participation Groups for the following groups of young people:-

- CiCC for under 10s
- CiCC for age range 10 -15
- Children and Young People subject to Child Protection Plans

- Children and Young People who are in need of support and services.
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and Young People.
- Children with Disabilities

The CiCC and development of their priorities are the main focus of the Participation Officer. The CiCC Priorities for 2012-2013 have been agreed by a number of members of the CiCC and will be taken to the next CiCC meeting for all members of the CiCC to agree.

Appendix B summarises the work plan for 2011/12 and the outcomes achieved.

Appendix C is a powerpoint presentation outlining the key points contained in the Annual Report (Appendix A)

Proposed priorities for 2012-2013.

Children in Care Council Meetings

- Monthly Meetings will be arranged for young people over the age of 16. These will be formal meetings and will allow us to work towards achieving the priorities identified by the CiCC.
- There will be two activity based Participation Groups, one for over 16 year olds and one for young people between the ages of 8 and 15. These activities will encourage the wider Looked After / Leaving Care population to attend informal consultation events whilst taking part in fun activities ensuring the views of looked after children are heard.
- Representatives to attend activities to act as peer mentors to younger children in care.
- Representatives of the CiCC to work towards gaining the views of the wider CiCC.
- Promote the work of the CiCC and recruit more young people to be part of the CiCC meetings and using other means of communication as requested by current members of the CiCC.
- Representatives of the CiCC will meet with workers and young people from the children with disabilities team to ensure their views are also heard.

Links to Corporate Parenting Panel

- CiCC members to attend Corporate Parenting Panel three times per year.
- CiCC members to meet with Director of Children's Services and Executive Member for Children's Services twice a year.
- CiCC members to meet with Assistant Director and Head of Service three times per year
- Additional meetings can be arranged as and when required between CiCC members and members of the CPP
- Information will be presented to CPP from the CiCC on the work of the CiCC

Consultation Events

- Work with Department for Education and The Children's Rights Director to ensure involvement in consultation events for Children in Care.
- Attend regional CiCC meetings and the annual National conference for CiCC organised by Children's Rights Officers and Advocates.
- Attend any other consultation events organised for children in care.

Central Bedfordshire Council Consultation

- Monitoring and reviewing the Pledge to ensure that The Pledge remains up to date and meaningful.
- Consultation on the LAC Review Process to improve young people's involvement
- Consultation on Health Assessments to improve the process for young people
- Consultation on the Pathway Planning process
- Carry out surveys for Central Bedfordshire's looked after children and leaving care young people to give them the opportunity to give their views

Recruitment and Training of Social Workers and Foster Carers for Central Bedfordshire Council

- Work with the Learning and Development team to develop an in house course for social workers and to be part of the NQSW programme of training
- Attend Information Evening for people interested in becoming a foster carer.
- Attend Skills to Foster training and facilitate workshops on 'what makes a good foster carer?'
- Member of the CiCC to be involved in the recruitment and selection process of new social workers and foster carers

Annual Awards Evening

- Annual Awards Evening for Children in Care and Care Leavers.
- Arrangements for the awards evening will be discussed in CiCC meetings and agreed by members.
- Nomination forms, invitations, certificates will be designed by members of the CiCC.
- A member of the CiCC will also attend the briefing session with the Assistant Director or Head of Safeguarding.

School holiday Activities Programme / Activity Based Participation

- A range of activities will be organised for younger children in care and could also include children on the edge of care.
- Consultation opportunities during the activities, representatives from the CiCC will attend the activities to support and encourage positive peer mentoring.
- Activity days for over 16 year olds to allow for their views to be heard whilst taking part in fun activities and socialising with other care leavers. The activities will also allow positive relationships to be developed with other social workers within the team.

Training for Social Work Students at the University of Bedfordshire and Step Up to Social Work Programme

- Work with the University of Bedfordshire and become part of the 'Experts by Experience Group'.
- Engage in training opportunities organised by the University of Bedfordshire.
- Members of the CiCC will be part of the recruitment and selection process for social work students.
- Members of the CiCC to be involved in the training and assessment of social work students.
- Members of the CiCC to be involved in the recruitment process for the Step Up to Social Work Programme.
- Members of the CiCC to be involved in the training for the Step Up to Social Work students.

Information for Looked after Children and Care Leavers

- Information to be put onto a web site so that it can also be accessible to all looked after children.
- Members of the CiCC to be involved in the design of an information pack for young people leaving care, ensuring it contains relevant information they need to help them make the transition to adulthood.
- Members of the CiCC to explore the use of social networking sites as a way to share information.

Newsletter to Children in Care

- A regular newsletter to be sent to all looked after children on the work of the CiCC, future events, consultation etc.

Website Specifically for Children in Care

- Website/page to be developed by the members of the CiCC
- Website/page to contain:
 - Information from LAC Packs.
 - Opportunity to promote consultation and feedback.
 - Contact information for teams within Central Bedfordshire Council.

- External agencies and other useful web sites.
- Information on the work of the CiCC including upcoming meeting dates.
- Information on the Activity Days.

A Fun Day / Charity Day / Consultation Day

- Consultation Day, to include fun activities with different services participating.
- To have the option of raising money for local charity.

Residential Trip for Members of the CiCC

- A residential trip specifically for members of the CiCC as a reward for their work.
- This residential trip will allow all the members of the CiCC to take part in a number of sessions to complete the CiCC tasks as outlined in our priorities.
- Members would be able to take part in team building exercises and other fun activities to develop their life skills.