



Children in Care Council and Participation 2013

Annual Report

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Aims and Objectives

The aim of the following report summarises and evaluates the agreed priorities of the CiCC and Participation over 2013 – 2014.

The CiCC produce a list of priorities which becomes their annual work plan. This report provides an overview of their work, its purpose and the outcomes of their commitment to achieving their priorities.

Children in Care Council Meetings

The CiCC have committed the last year to maintaining monthly meetings and have 17 active members in the 16 – 25 year olds group which includes Asylum seeking young people. The CiCC produce a list of priorities which becomes their annual work plan and their monthly meeting agenda focuses on their priorities. Each meeting is chaired by a CiCC member and this is alternated at each meeting. Agendas and minutes are recorded at each meeting and shared to update CiCC members on the actions from the previous meetings.

The priorities agreed are then carried out throughout the year and the CiCC are supported by the Participation Officer to assist their priorities to be achieved.

The CiCC peer mentors our younger group “Young Voices” which has averaged at 25 young people under the age of 16 to meet during school holidays and engage in participation activities. The “Young Voices” wishes and feelings are then contributed to the CiCC.

Four newsletters per year have been written by the CiCC. The newsletter contains information about events that have taken place, events that are coming up and encouraging young people to share their wishes and feelings by joining the CiCC.

The CiCC are committed to making positive change within Central Bedfordshire and also to build skills and qualifications for themselves. All members of the CiCC have created portfolios of their work to support with applying for employment, education and training. Members are also supported by the Participation Officers to develop curriculum vitae and gain accreditations for specific pieces of work.

Tasha who is a member of our CiCC reflected:

“In the first 3 months of being involved in the CiCC has helped me see things differently and also given me a chance to share my ideas and possibly make better change for children in care. Being a member of the CiCC has opened so many doors for me by doing things I’ve never done before!”

Links to Corporate Parenting

Members of the CiCC continue to attend Corporate Parenting Panel three times per year as agreed in the CiCC Priorities.

Young people attending panel averages at two CiCC members per panel this is largely due to educational and employment commitments. This year the CiCC presented their work about the Entitlements Inquiry to Corporate Parenting Panel. Work completed in Corporate Parenting Panel was included in the CiCC "Say it Loud!" newsletter (**see appendix 1**) which is sent to our looked after children and care leavers.

Discussions have taken place with how the CiCC can strengthen links with Corporate Parenting Panel and this is an area of focus for 2014 for the CiCC.

Members of the CiCC and Young Voices meet with the Chief Executive and the Director of Children's Services two times per year to discuss their work plans, what they are currently working on and their priorities for the following six months. The CiCC are encouraged to be honest in discussions about their experiences and empower the young people to share what changes need to happen. For example young people wanted more opportunities using leisure facilities and during the summer were given ten free swimming tokens and a football coach programme which ran over the summer holidays.

CiCC meet with the Assistant director three times per year to discuss their priorities and forthcoming work plan. They also have additional opportunities to meet more frequently during corporate events, interviews and participation activities.

Head of Corporate Parenting regularly meets with the CiCC to discuss service developments. For example, consultation work took place regarding the remodeling of the looked after children's team.

Daytona who is a CiCC member said:

"I think it is very good that senior member of staffs take such an interest to young people and the work we have to offer to the service as they don't have to take an interest! They don't have to be involved but they choose to and because of that young people across central Bedfordshire feel more valued."

Consultation Events

Looked after Children and Young People leaving care are represented at regional and national levels through CiCC events and national surveys such as the "Children's Rights" and "All Party Parliamentary Group".

A number of Central Bedfordshire specific consultations have also taken place this year. These consultations focused on issues such as education, health and service feedback. The purpose of these consultations is to obtain the

wishes and feelings of young people and to incorporate this into service improvements.

An example of this is signing the Department for Education Charter for Care Leavers. This Charter is a promise from Central Bedfordshire to support them with things such as:

“We will hold a belief in your potential and a vision for your future even if you have lost sight of these yourself.”

“We will value your strengths, gifts and talents and encourage your aspirations.”

To support our Pledge: *“we will offer you opportunities to take part in activities to help to stay fit and healthy”* consultations have taken place with both our Health and Leisure departments. During the summer holidays young people were given free swimming passes for individuals and foster families. A football coaching programme was also available for Looked after Children and Care Leavers.

Work with our Health and Leisure departments is ongoing and further developments are in progress for 2014 with regards to more sporting opportunities and experiences for Looked after Children and Care Leavers.

Annual Awards Evening

The Annual Awards evening is the opportunity to celebrate with our Looked after Children and Care Leavers and their achievements over the past year.

200 nominations were received this year from a range of professionals which is our highest amount to date. The CiCC planned the Awards Event and were responsible for decorations, entertainment, refreshments and designing the invitations and certificates. CiCC members opened the evening and performed a fitting song on an acoustic guitar.

Our Assistant Director compered the Awards evening and Executive Member for Children’s Services presented the awards to each young person.

The Chairman of the Council addressed the event speaking to the children, young people and adults about their achievements and her pride in being part of the occasion.

All young people who were nominated received a voucher and a certificate. The Council Chambers was decorated to promote the work of the CiCC and there was also an opportunity to complete our “Say it Loud” survey and share what each individual was most proud of during that year.

Some examples are:

“I haven’t ran away for 4 months and have attended school for 5 weeks without a day off.” Louise

***Going to a Michael Jackson tribute night and going horse riding.”
Nathan***

***“Changing school and making new friends and also getting up when I
don’t always get things right” Hannah***

Entertainment was also provided at the event by a Magician, Circus Skills Workshop, DJ, a Paper Plane Contest, Face Painting and Glitter Tattoos organised by staff and managers within Children’s Services.

Feedback from the awards has been very positive from young people and professionals and was featured in “Staff Central”. **(See appendix 2)**

Activity Based Participation and Activities Programme

Activities are provided during school holidays for our Looked after Children and Care Leavers. These events provide opportunity for young people to socialize with others in care and offer peer support through our peer mentors. The purpose of these activities are to provide new experiences and to create an creative opportunity for young people to express their views about decisions made that affect them, learning about their rights, and helping to inform them about their future as well as having fun.

During the summer holidays 8 participation activities were held which included Outdoor Activities, Swimming, Falconry Experience and Ice Skating. There were around 30 young people who attended at least one activity day and members of the CiCC also came along to support the young children and act as peer mentors.

The University of Bedfordshire organised a day for Looked after Children between the ages of 8 – 12 years old called “Sowing Seeds”. The aim of the day is to provide a taster session for children and gain early interest and awareness for possibilities of attending University. Sowing seeds is a workshop designed for children to promote awareness for going to University and raising their educational aspirations.

“Just thought you would like to know that I saw the W siblings last week and they all told me how much fun they had on the activities. D in particular loved the ice skating and it's all she wanted to tell me about! All she talked about was the CiCC and told me all about what they did on the activity day a while ago. Just wanted to tell you this as being part of the group has really benefitted D!” Sarah Harper Social worker

Residential Trips

The purpose of residential trips is to provide children and young people experiences that will increase their confidence, help develop a new level of independence and develop their skills and knowledge beyond their normal day to day living.

There were two residential trip opportunities for Looked after Children and Care Leavers this year.

The University of Bedfordshire organised a two nights, three days trip for Young People in years 10 and 11. The purpose of the residential was for Young People to have the opportunity to discuss and explore their educational options, learn revision techniques and receive career advice.

There were five Central Bedfordshire Looked after Children who attended with support from the Participation Officer. All young people who attended have completed their GCSE and 4 are in further education and 1 has started a apprenticeship through Central Bedfordshire Council.

The Youth Support team worked alongside the Participation Officers and organized a residential trip with members of the CiCC and Youth Parliament. The objective of the residential was to strengthen the links between the CiCC and Youth Parliament and planning future combined work.

Feedback from young people who attend residential has consistently been positive. Young people have requested residential opportunities to continue and have residential trips as a means to consult with young people and support them with developing social, emotional and independent skills.

“I felt about 4/10 this morning because I was nervous and am not very confident. Now I am 7/10 because I’ve got to know people from team building games. I want to learn more about independent skills and see what it’s like to live on my own.” William

Recruitment and Training of Social Worker and Foster Carers

The objective of the CiCC is to be involved in training and recruitment is to establish a clear message that Central Bedfordshire demonstrates child centered practice. As looked after children and care leavers the CiCC provides specialist insight to what young people consider to be the vital skills to have the best professional working with young people.

The CiCC have worked closely with the Learning and Development manager and have created their own training programme which was delivered to the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) employees. Feedback provided by the attendees was very positive as they felt training by young people who have social workers was invaluable.

Members of the CiCC have been working with the University of Bedfordshire to provide workshops to undergraduate and post graduate students. This workshop focuses on reflective work around the positive qualities of a social worker.

The CiCC also deliver training to foster carers where they make 3D houses and identify *“As a Foster Carer, what will you provide to children that come into your care?”* The CiCC then ask the Foster Carers *“What do you think are some of the barriers for children in your care and how will you overcome them?”* Members of the CiCC also attended the information evenings for Foster Carers and presented information to people who were interested in becoming a Foster Carers.

Head of Corporate Parenting, Social Worker, Personal Advisor and Social Work Students on the Step Up programme have also been interviewed by the CiCC. These interviewing panels have been conducted in an assortment of ways which included: role play, set panel questions, group activities and joint panels.

Fun Day/ Charity Events/ Consultation Day

During the Christmas holidays the CiCC arranged a ‘winter wonderland’ themed event for all young people aged 16 years and older which was attended by 28 young people, staff from the looked after, leaving care and Asylum service as well as Edwina Grant and Gerard Jones. **(See appendix 3)**

The CiCC have been involved in two charity events during 2013. A Cake Sale was held and £80 was raised for Comic Relief.

Christmas Cards were designed by our Looked after Children and Care Leavers and sold to staff raising £375 for Keech Cottage.

Participation Work Plan

The Participation Officers have continued to work towards the Work Plan that was agreed.

In September 2012 a secondment opportunity for an additional full time Participation Officer was agreed and appointed. This contract has been extended until 1st May 2014 when the substantive post holder returns from maternity leave.

Participation Officers continue to promote participation to the Social Work Teams, attending Team Meetings to promote the work of the CiCC and wider participation.

Conclusion

Over the past year the CiCC have continued to meet on a regular basis and made significant efforts to promote and raise awareness of their work through mediums such as their "Say it Loud" newsletter and attending national and regional events.

The CiCC have maintained strong links with their Corporate Parents and have had opportunities throughout the year to discuss their priorities and evidence how they have worked in achieving these. The CiCC would like to explore strengthening their relationships with Councillors and inviting them to attend CiCC events, meeting others in care and establishing a more creative way to interact with their corporate children and young people.

There have been a number of consultation events with a variety of ages over the past year. The CiCC will explore ways to encourage a higher number of young people to feedback their wishes and feelings to increase representation.

The summer activities programme continues to be a successful way for our young people to have enrichment experiences, peer support and mentor each other. The participation officers also support the summer activities programme to engage with a large group of young people and have this opportunity to consult with them and discuss their rights.

The CiCC have been involved with interviewing and providing training and have worked closely with the Learning and Development manager. The CiCC continue to evaluate how they can improve the training they provide and how this can be developed for 2014/15. Due to the changes in Foster and Adoption service the foster carer information evening will no longer take place and the CiCC have been asked to attend additional training sessions provided for foster carers.

The CiCC continue to discuss innovative ways they can promote their work, raise awareness and encourage more young people to become part of the CiCC. More exploration into this will take place in 2014/15 regarding events and multi agency awareness.

Forward Plan

(See appendix 4 - attached)

Please find attached appendix 1, 2 and 3.

Say It Loud!

Activities

There has been loads of activities which lots of young people have been taking part in. Over the summer we had days including swimming, assault courses, canoeing, Thorpe park just to name a few! The activities are a great way to meet other people in care and make friends.



Awards



Thank you to everyone who came to the awards evening in October!

Children and young people who are in care or are care leavers celebrated their 'Annual Achievement Awards' on Friday the 4th October.



The ceremony took place at Central Bedfordshire's Council Chambers at Chicksands in Bedfordshire where Central Bedfordshire's Children in Care Council organised the event and decided on food options, entertainment, venue decorations, designing the invites and certificates; whilst also being consulted on the agenda for the evening.



"It was really special this year, and this made the Awards extra special. We would not have pulled off such an amazing night if it weren't for the hard work of the members of the CICC. I personally would not change anything, as it has been the best Awards by far. I believe that you should be able to celebrate your achievements with everyone!"

By Charlotte



Sahra won an outstanding achievement award for making amazing efforts with her college studies!



Appendix 1a

Looked after children and care leavers Entitlements Inquiry

During the summer some of us were asked what we knew about our entitlements as looked after children and care leavers. We spoke about having care plans, lac reviews, and visits from our social workers.

The CiCC attended a meeting at the House of Commons to discuss the Entitlements Inquiry's and how young people can be helped with knowing what their entitlements are. Lots of important people were at the House of Commons and the MP for Children and Families, Edward Timpson was there and we asked him questions.

"My own experiences are what gave me the courage to speak up to make a difference for other young people. I asked about the leaving care grants and when they should be allowed to be used. Edward Timpson took on board my views and addressed the issues and said in the near future he plans to make a change. We need more chances to speak up and voice our views to our MP's to make sure our voices are heard."
Rebeka

Youth Parliament

Youth Parliament is young people working together to make positive changes within Central Bedfordshire. Youth Parliament meets on a regular bases to discuss, debate, action plan and work towards their priorities.

Elections to Youth Parliament are taking place in January 2014. If you want to know more about Youth Parliament, be part of influencing change, meet new friends or put your views across then Youth Parliament maybe for you.

If you want to make a difference and be a part of youth parliament then contact Claire Seamarks with your details.

"Walking in a Winter Wonderland..."



The CiCC are in the process of organising a Winter Wonderland celebration in December for our 16+ young people and care leavers.

"The winter wonderland party is going to be awesome. There will be food, games, music and loads of fun. It's a great opportunity to meet new people!" Tasha

Social workers will be inviting our looked after young people aged 16 and above to attend the event. There will be a sit down meal for all young people, games, gifts and entertainment.

We are hoping for a large turn out of our young people. If your young person would like to attend and they are 16 years or over please let your social worker know.



If you would like to join CiCC or want to know more about the things going on it would be great to hear from you!

Please send Claire Seamarks an email with any questions or comments to Claire.seamarks@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



We've gone pink to support Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Staff Central

For your latest news and information

Central Bedfordshire



Sahra (second left), receives her Outstanding Achievement award at the recent celebration at Priory House

Celebrating looked after children

Our annual celebration of Central Bedfordshire's looked after children and care leavers took place recently, recognising personal achievements that range from educational successes to demonstrations of courage and resilience.

There were more than 200 nominees for this year's awards, which were organised by our Children in Care Council and held at Priory House.

Everyone who was nominated received a certificate, and special awards were handed out including an 'Outstanding Achievement' award that went to Sahra, a refugee, originally from Eritrea, who has been living in the UK for less than two years. Sahra was praised for the great progress she has made in her studies since starting her college course in Health and Social Care.

Claire Seamarks, Participation Officer, was involved in organising the awards and said: "This annual event shows our pride in these inspirational young people, but also reflects the great support they receive from our carers, social workers and other council staff, which enables them to have a successful and healthy life once they leave our care."

22 October 2013

Also in this issue:

- [Make One Change](#)
- [Caddington Ward update](#)
- [Christmas working/pay details](#)
- [The Central Beds Tache Squad](#)
- [Legal team makes first move](#)
- [Modelling opportunity](#)
- [Wear It Pink / Big Pink Quiz](#)
- [Final squad members needed!](#)
- [Be physically and financially fitter for the festive season](#)
- [Clocks go back this weekend](#)



As a council, we aim to encourage greater independence and self-reliance amongst our residents, but Richard considers how successful he has been at putting this theory into practice with his own family.



Find out about the latest ILM Leadership and Management Award Level 5 opportunity on [page 7](#).

Planned system outage

As part of the ongoing efforts to resolve the problems with our computer systems, Information Assets will be running tests on Tuesday, 22 October from 7.00pm to 9.00pm – during this time our computer systems and website will largely be unavailable.

Please remember to report new incidents, and add additional detail to existing open incidents, using the [IA Service Desk Portal](#).

Appendix 3

Wonderful Winter Wonderland event

Just before Christmas, staff from our Children's Services Directorate held a 'Winter Wonderland'-themed event, giving looked after children, care leavers and young people seeking asylum, a chance to enjoy a very special festive celebration.

The event for 16-21 year olds, which Edwina Grant, Director of Children's Services, and Gerard Jones, Assistant Director Children's Services Operations, both attended, was packed full of festive fun.

It included a buffet of international cuisine prepared by the management team, a disco, a quiz, a giant pass-the-parcel, staff singing carols and visits from Santa and a panda, which was actually Edward Wong in disguise!



(Left to right); Mark Ciuro, Deputy Team Manager - 13+ Transition and Leaving Care Team, Edward Wong, Head of Corporate Parenting, and Gerard Jones, Assistant Director Children's Services Operations



Edwina Grant, Director of Children's Services, with a young party-goer

Edward, who has recently been appointed to the post of Head of Corporate Parenting, explained: "Christmas can be an emotional time of year for young people who live away from their family. Within Children's Services, staff across a range of teams play an important part in our role as a 'Corporate Parent'.

"As part of fulfilling our role, we wanted to ensure that these young people had the same opportunity for some festive fun and happy Christmas memories as others of a similar age. The event was a real success and I'd like to thank everyone who helped make it possible."

In related news, our Children in Care Council (CICC) raised money for a children's charity by asking looked after children and care leavers to design some impressive Christmas cards. The cards were sold to council staff and helped raise £300, which the council's Conference and Review team donated a further £75 to. All the proceeds have gone to Keech Cottage – a local hospice for children, young people and adults diagnosed with life-limiting conditions.

Information Assets maintenance weekend: 25-26 January

Thank you to everyone who provided feedback on Information Assets' (IA's) proposed plans for regular service downtime, which would enable the team to carry out essential maintenance on a more planned basis.

IA would like to confirm that the first maintenance weekend will take place from Saturday, 25 to Sunday, 26 January – the main area that will be affected this month will be the Blue Network.

Maintenance weekends will continue to take place on the fourth weekend of every month, which are likely to affect different systems and different groups of staff. The level of disruption will vary according to the work taking place.

These maintenance weekends will enable the IA team to take a more controlled approach to out-of-hours work and service outages. However, staff are advised that ad-hoc service downtime, outside of these planned maintenance weekends, may still be required.

Priorities	Action	Timescales	Accountability	Outcomes
Support CiCC with achieving priorities for 2014.	Continue to work through agreed priorities plan.	Ongoing throughout 2014	CiCC and Participation Officers	Young people to have a voice in relation to the planning and delivery of services they receive. Feedback will influence and improve services to LAC & LAAC To develop a sense a belonging and shared identity with others who have similar experiences. To increase their confidence & raise self esteem and establish transferable and valuable life skills Be part of the planning and operational process. To engage with officers and elected members within CBC.
Children with Disabilities. Increase involvement and engagement.	Liaise with CWD Head of Service.	Initial strategy completed by the end of April 2014	CWD Head of Service and Participation Officers	Children with disabilities will be represented within the CiCC and strategies will be established where their wishes and feelings will be incorporated into service developments.
Encourage more engagement from looked after children and care leavers in participation activities.	Improve relationships with social workers, foster carers and personal advisors in promoting participation	February (half term) April (Easter holidays) August (Summer holidays) October (Half term)	Participation Officers, Team managers for looked after children and leaving care, Social workers, Personal Advisors &	The numbers of young people engaging in participation activities will be over 10% of the population of looked after children and care leavers. Young people will benefit from peer support, positive interactions with other young people who are in care and this will be recorded in case notes and statutory visits.

	events and staff engagement.	December (Winter holidays)	Foster Carers	
Establish consultation work with a more representative cohort of young people including out of county.	CBC specific surveys developed for social workers and Personals advisors to incorporate into their statutory visits.	July 2014	Participation Officers, Social Workers, Personal Advisors	CBC to have specific feedback about the quality of service young people are receiving and use this information to make positive change.
Further develop relationships with members of Corporate Parenting Panel and the CiCC.	CiCC to research into how other local authorities engage with their councillors and develop a strategy of how the CiCC, looked after children and care leavers will engage with councillors.	Ongoing throughout 2014.	Participation Officers, CiCC and Councillors	CiCC, looked after children and care leavers will have greater opportunities to meet with councillors and discuss their experiences of care and contribute to service developments. Councillors having more involvement with a wider cohort of young people looked after and care leavers to strengthen links and raise awareness of the importance of having meaningful relationships as corporate parents.

