



Children and Young People's Voice

June 2015

**Central Bedfordshire
Children's Trust**

Introduction

Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust Board is committed to listening and involving children and young people as a means of ensuring the right services are being provided at the right time, needs are being met, and outcomes improved for children and young people growing up in Central Bedfordshire.

This report provides an update on key 'children and young people's voice' initiatives that have taken place and forms part of Children's Trust Board Annual Report.



1. Feedback and Involvement

Some of the groups helping us to improve services

Central Bedfordshire
Youth Parliament

Youth Auditors

Young
Commissioners

Asylum Seeking Children and
Young People
(Reach the Dream Group)

Children in Care
Council
And Young Voices

Young Directors
(Health Watch)

Looked after children

Young Carers

Children and Young People with Special
Educational Needs and Disabilities
including Young Researchers

Young people involved in
recruitment processes

Children on Child
Protection and Children in
Need Plans

Year 6, 8 and 10 pupils in some middle and
upper schools (including special schools)

In some cases engagement activities referred to in this report pre-date 2014/15 but have been included where updates on actions are provided.

Consultations referenced may include small sample groups



2. Children and Young People's Voice (Engagement and Activity Updates)

2.1 Youth Parliament

- 2.1.1** Central Bedfordshire Youth Parliament (CBYP) has been active since 2010. Elections are carried out on a two year term in upper schools / secondary and special schools across Central Bedfordshire along with associated youth groups. There are also elections for four young people from across Central Bedfordshire to represent Central Bedfordshire on UK Youth Parliament.
- 2.1.2** CBYP provides opportunities for young people to use their voice in creative ways to bring about social change. It helps to influence the services provided and ensure the views of young people are known and understood.
- 2.1.3** There is Youth Parliament representation on Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire, Police Independent Advisory Group, Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust Board and mental health of young people in schools forum.
- 2.1.4** The recently launched CBYP Youth Voice Manifesto 2015/16 explains how consultation takes place to determine priorities for the coming year:

'Each year, the Youth Parliament consults with young people from across Central Bedfordshire using the Make Your Mark consultation. Make Your Mark is a national, annual ballot that gives young people a say on what is debated by their Members of Youth Parliament in the House of Commons. The ballot consists of 10 issues, but young people can only vote for one issue that is of the most importance to them. Data is collected from across the country and the top five issues are debated and voted for in the House of Commons. The two issues that receive the highest votes become national campaigns that each Local Authority Youth Voice is required to adopt. In addition to this, Central Bedfordshire Youth Voice select their local campaign on the issue(s) that received the highest votes in Central Bedfordshire but did not pass as a national campaign in the House of Commons.' **CBYP Youth Voice Manifesto 2015/16**

The Make your Mark 2014 results for Central Bedfordshire are as follows:

2.1.5

| Issue | Votes |
|--|--|
| Living Wage | 1375 |
| Work Experience | 876 |
| Maths & English Resits | 804 |
| Euthanasia | 625 |
| Mental Health | 616 |
| Curriculum for life | 450 |
| Votes at 16 | 403 |
| Fund our Youth Services | 307 |
| Young people directly involved in making laws | 285 |
| Give young people a voice in their communities | 235 |
| Total | 5976 = 23.76% of Youth Population |

2.1.6 This has resulted in the following priorities for 2015/16:

- Better work experience (Local Campaign)
- Improved mental health services for young people (National Campaign)
- Living wage for all, regardless of age (National Campaign – and also the top local issue)

2.1.7 Work has already taken place in respect of these priorities for example:

- Work Experience – Alastair Burt MP has provided Youth Parliament with a breakdown of what schools in his constituency offer in the way of work experience (and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)) as he was concerned with the level of variation. A survey is currently being undertaken with young people around their experiences and views on work experience.
- National Campaigns - Living wage for all, and improved mental health services. Meetings have taken place with the Leader of Central Bedfordshire Council, Executive Member for Children’s Services, Alastair Burt MP and Andrew Selous MP.
- Links have been made with MIND and Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group to campaign for better mental health services, and young people are working alongside an exciting new initiative with community members who are setting up a Mental Health Forum.

2.1.8

'It's really exciting to finally launch our manifesto for the next year after everyone has worked so hard putting it together. Although we will continue to campaign for young people on a range of different issues, the manifesto focuses on our priorities for 2015/16.

The campaigns for improved mental health services for young people and a living wage for everyone are incredibly important issues in Central Bedfordshire. Out of the 5,976 votes cast across Central Bedfordshire, 1,375 voted for a living wage, making this the top issue across the area. These were closely followed by more meaningful work placements for people over the age of 16. This is really important in helping to shape future careers and give young people an idea of the qualifications they need to follow a particular path.

We are looking forward to working with as many groups as possible over the next year to ensure that young people's voices continue to be heard in Central Bedfordshire.'

Chair Ellen Burke.

Extract: Central Bedfordshire Council Press Release

2.1.9 Engagement and consultation with Youth Parliament in 2015 includes:

- Green spaces (countryside access, Wildlife Trust)
- Luton and Dunstable Hospital Services
- The road 'Safety Car' 'OSCAR' promoting road safety to young drivers throughout Central Bedfordshire
- Children and Young People's Plan (March 2015 – March 2017)

A short film on Central Bedfordshire Youth Parliament is available on YouTube (by searching 'Central Bedfordshire Youth Parliament').

2.2 Youth Auditors - Youth Audit

2.2.1 The Central Bedfordshire Youth Audit (2013) was the first in the country to examine the commissioned Youth Offer services, which are provided on behalf of and by Central Bedfordshire Council. In particular, the Youth Audit was asked to assess to what extent the Youth Offer translates from policy into practice.

2.2.2 Youth Auditors were recruited from previous Young Inspector Programmes in Central Bedfordshire, Members of the Central Bedfordshire Youth Parliament and Central Bedfordshire Young Commissioners. There are 8 members of the Youth Audit team.

2.2.3 The Youth Audit involves reviewing existing strategies, action plans, needs assessments, consultation responses and commissioning specifications. It

also involves gathering targeted questionnaires (with the help of the Corporate Consultation team), holding interviews, and involving the people who are responsible for, run and use the services.

2.2.4 The Youth Audit Action Plan – attached as Appendix A provides further detail as to recommendations and progress being made against agreed actions. It is regularly reviewed by young people and it is anticipated that a full audit of youth provision will take place in Summer 2015.

2.2.5 In 2015/16 Youth Auditors will be involved in the following:

- Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) minimum standards focus groups in school
- Briefings for Audit Review
- Quality Assurance Information, Advice and Guidance and Volunteering
- Interviews with key Council officers and stakeholders
- Youth Audit

2.3 Young Commissioners

2.3.1 Young Commissioners are young people trained to work alongside the Youth Support Service. There are 10 Young Commissioners and they undertake the following to ensure Central Bedfordshire is able to provide the best possible provision for young people;

- Making professional judgements on what applications receive funding to provide services.
- Ensuring children and young people receive the best possible standards of participation in organisations that work with them and also have an impact on them.
- Visiting services that work with and impact upon children and young people to assess and evaluate how well they are performing against a set criteria assessment, advise on improvements and report on their findings.
- Enabling and allowing young people to have their voices heard and giving them the opportunity to shape and influence services.
- Encouraging existing services and providers to reflect on their practice and implement change.

2.3.2 Projects and tenders that young people have been involved in to date include:

- Youth work
- Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)
- Volunteering
- Sexual health
- Substance misuse
- Mental health services

- 2.3.3** In 2015/16 Young Commissioners will be involved with the following:
- Peer Mentoring Tender
 - Youth Work Tender
 - Inspection of Corporate Parenting - a joint piece of work with existing Young Commissioners and members of the Children in Care Council

What it can mean to be involved - feedback from Young Commissioners:

"I really enjoyed it, especially the interviews. I Feel like I'm being taken seriously and I'm being listened to. This is going to look great on my cv- the fact that I have interviewed people for actual contracts as well as learning about commissioning; it could even give me a start in that direction for a career if I wanted. Thank you!"

"It has been very interesting to sit on both the Youth and Adult Panels. It has been good to know that Central Beds is valuing Young Peoples views when appointing companies to Youth Work in the area, because if Young People think the companies are going to be good for them, it can really influence what the Adult Panel finally decides. Also the fact that the marks were split near enough 50/50 with both panels meant that the Youth actually had power into who was going to get the contract."

"Overall, my experience as a youth commissioner has, so far, been both pleasant and interesting. I really appreciate being able to input in decisions such as these and representing the young people in my local area. I've learnt skills that a regular classroom environment could not teach me, like: the process of auditioning in a real situation, interacting with adults as well as other young people and arguing my opinions when I feel strongly. It has been thoroughly enjoyable and I look forward to continuing my work with the rest of the commissioners."

2.4 Young Carers

- 2.4.1** Young carers are children who look after someone in their family e.g. a person who has an illness, a disability, a mental health problem or a substance misuse problem. There are 636 young carers registered with Carers In Bedfordshire.
- 2.4.2** The Central Bedfordshire JSNA includes that 'Inappropriate levels of caring impact on a child's own emotional and physical health as well as their educational achievement and life chances' and that 'Young carers who are well supported are likely to build resilience, build support networks and develop skills that will support them into adulthood.' Views on the support offered therefore play an important part in improving outcomes.
- 2.4.3** A small number of young carers receive a one to one intervention. They complete an assessment at the end which looks at the impact of attending and also how useful and enjoyable participating has been.

2.4.4 The Children's Trust Board monitors the support offered to young carers and in Quarter 2 2014/15 (last available data) 97% of identified young carers were supported.

2.4.5 The recently refreshed Children and Young People's Plan includes the measure the 'Number of young carers identified and offered support' through which the Trust Board will continue to be updated on the support offered.

2.4.6 The Young Carers Crew (peer led steering group) will also be brought together to enable young carers to have a voice in the implementation of the young carers plan.

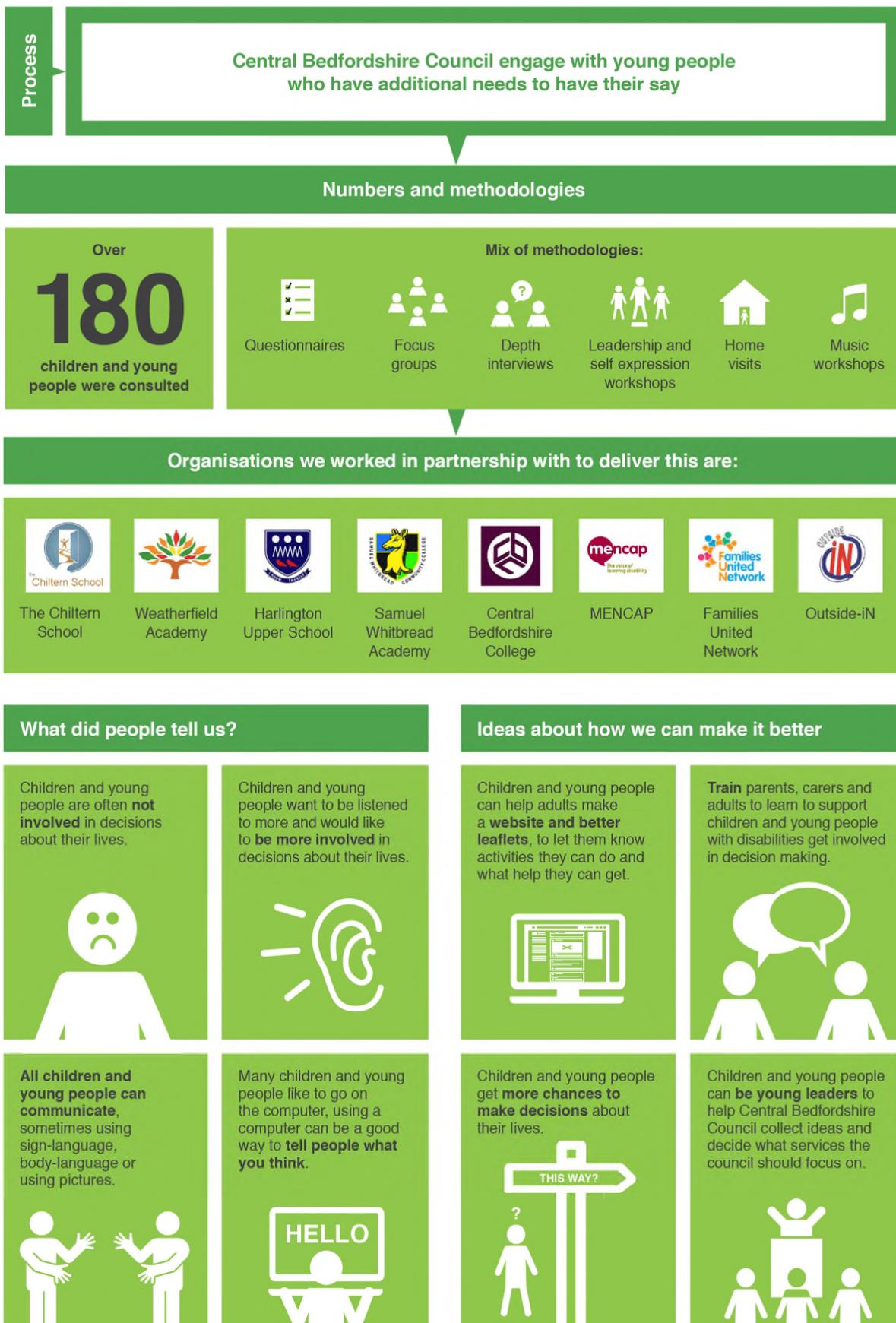
2.5 School Councils

2.5.1 Schools councils are a means of involving children and young people in decision making processes relevant to the running of a school, varying from choice of uniform to school meals. School councils can also be run as part of the school's citizenship or personal, social and health education programs. Many of Central Bedfordshire's schools use school councils.

2.6 Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

2.6.1 Central Bedfordshire Council's Support and Aspiration Board has led on the commissioning of a strategy for the 'effective and meaningful' participation of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The SEND Participation Strategy 2015 will be made available this summer. Over 180 children and young people with disabilities were consulted on the development of the Strategy.

2.6.2



Send Participation Infographic' Acknowledgement: Kaizen Partnership

2.6.3 As part of the work, and the consultation with children, young people and their families, SEND Participation Guidance has been developed which includes:

- **Let me have enough time:** *'Adults are good at listening if they have the time, it's all about people who have time for you and don't rush you.'* Often a lack of confidence or self-esteem can hold people back from expressing themselves, ensure young people have enough time to be able to do so.
- **Really get to know me:** *'I don't want just anyone helping me, make sure there are people to help me that I know and trust.'* Take time to get know the young person you are supporting, and ensure the continuity of people involved as far as possible, but especially at the start and end of projects.
- **Don't limit my aspirations:** *'I would like to create my own films but need support.'* Recognise, celebrate and respect individual skills, talents and strengths. Give people time to explore options that can help them work towards achieving their goals in a meaningful way.
- **Support and encourage me:** *'I don't know the words to say something.'* Provide support and opportunities to practice decision-making so young people build confidence; inspire young person to get involved and sincerely encourage them when they do, recognising their achievements.
- **Visit me where I am relaxed:** *'Someone should go and visit the college and find out about our views.'* Work with children and young people in environments that they are familiar with, or allow time so they can get to know a new space.
- **Talk to me in a way I understand:** *'You need to know the young people you are talking to. If someone has autism, if you knew them, you would know what to ask them, how to ask it and if you should ask.'* Adapt your approach for each person, and ensure it is right for him or her.
- **Let me use what I need to communicate:** *It is of utmost importance to use whichever communication system or approach that young people use, including Makaton, British Sign Language, PECS, Talking Mats and other augmented communication systems.*
- **Explain what you really mean:** *'Questionnaires are ok, but you really need someone to help you go through them so you really get the point.'* Some people may repeat what you say when they are unsure of how to respond, or are anxious; use different approaches and communicate clearly.
- **Let me chose:** *Working with friends or in pairs 'like we are doing now' can be a good way for some young people to gain confidence to express themselves 'not in a big group or writing things down.'* Allow young people to choose themselves the best way for them to participate.
- **Be flexible:** *Children and young people like using technology and other methods to help them express their views including iPads, computers, theatre, video and arts based activities. Keep activities simple, engaging, relevant to them and their life and most of all fun!*
- **Stick to what's agreed, or let me know if things change:** *Routine can be very important; predictable start and finish times are good. If*

plans change, it is really important to let young people know in advance so that they are prepared and less likely to become anxious.

- **Be aware of how you may come across:** *'People from the council should come and talk to us, a softer person, someone you can trust. People in suits are intimidating.'* *Be proactive and use an approach that works, it doesn't have to be complicated; most of all really listen to each person and respect their views.*

2.6.4 Next steps will include the creation of a young people's forum to take forward the development of the Local Offer which gives children and young people with SEND and their families information about what support services the local authority think will be available in their local area.

2.6.5 Other engagement activities include a recent project commissioned by Bedford and District Cerebral Palsy Society and undertaken by Bedford Creative Arts which gave a group of young people with disabilities the opportunity to design a billboard.

2.7 Children in Care Council

2.7.1 The Children in Care Council (CiCC) is a group of children and young people who are or have been in the care of Central Bedfordshire Council. The members of the CiCC work with the Corporate Parenting Panel to improve services for Central Bedfordshire Council's looked after children. There are currently 24 members of the CiCC.

2.7.2 The Children in Care council includes children aged 16-25. There is also a 'Young Voices' group which engages with younger children. There are currently 29 member of the Young Voices Group.

2.7.3 The Children in Care Council and Participation Annual Report 2014/15 provides a summary and evaluation of the work of the Children in Care Council. Details can be found in the report on the Children's Trust Board website www.centralbedfordshirechildrenstrust.org.uk

2.7.4 Preparation of the Annual Report 2014/15 included asking members of the CiCC what had been achieved over the past year - their response follows:

Members of the Children in Care Council were asked 'What has the CiCC achieved over the last year?'

- *The Awards – This was the biggest event to date with 108 young people receiving their award on the night.*
- *Recruitment Involvement – CiCC members took part in the recruitment of the Director of Children's Services, the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Board, 9 managers across Children's Services, 2 personal advisers working for the Youth Support Team and 6 days of Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) social worker recruitment.*
- *The Frontline Programme – CiCC members organised training for 120 social work students and were asked to return to be part of another day*

as part of the training placement for the students.

- *Working with the Commissioning Service – CiCC members were involved from the outset with the tendering processes for supported accommodation for leaving care young people and the advocacy and independent visitor contracts.*
- *Shadowing the Chief Executive – one member of the CiCC spent the afternoon shadowing the Chief Executive, Richard Carr at the Senior Management Team meeting.*
- *Children’s Commissioner Participation Group – 2 members of our CiCC attend this group.*
- *Summer Activities – 36 young people aged 8 – 15 year, and 19 over 16’s attended one activity day.*
- *Peer Mentors – CiCC have continued to mentor younger looked after children.*
- *Training Days for Assisted and Supported Year of Employment – CiCC have developed and received accreditation for the training they delivered.*
- *Consultation on ‘Our approach to Corporate Parenting in Central Bedfordshire Council 2014 – 2017’ – A group of young people including members of CiCC were consulted to make comments on the policy and action plan*
- *Consultation Booklets – new consultation booklets have been redesigned and reworded with the involvement of the CiCC.*
- *Development of a Passport to Independence – This was an idea from the CiCC members to help prove that they are ready to move to independent living.*

2.8 Children on Child Protection and Children in Need Plans

2.8.1 A consultation exercise was carried out between July and September 2014 with young people on Child Protection and Child in Need Plans. The aim was to empower young people to discuss their experiences independently and to establish common threads and recommendations for change to improve services for children subject to plans.

2.8.2 Approximately, 30 families were nominated for consultation and 15 young people were successfully contacted and consulted with. The detailed findings and recommendations from the consultation exercise were considered by Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (CBSCB) at its meeting in March 2015. CBSCB is committed to hearing children and young people’s voices and this is reflected in their priorities for 2015/16. In addition the structure of CBSCB has recently been reviewed - resulting in the formation of a new ‘Voice of the Child’ sub- group.

2.8.3 The questions asked were concluded with the young people being asked whether they had a message for Children’s Services about the Child Protection, Child in Need process or other needs.

2.8.4 The messages from young people were then focused into 3 areas; relationship building, consistency and communication.

2.8.5 Collectively there is a clear message from the young people that they feel if they had an established relationship with their social worker it would enable them to express their wishes and feelings, reduce stigmas and empower them to have a voice that is listened to.

Quotes from children on child protection and children in need plans include:

- *'A social worker helps you work through stuff.'*
- *'Make sure social workers explain why they're there. It's not just to take them away.'*
- *'Social workers should get to know us as individuals so everyone in the family is different and feels differently.'*
- *"Be consistent. Don't start a case if you can't follow it through.'*
- *'Stop quitting.'*
- *'Social workers need better training. They (social worker) need to explain to us why they are at their (young person) home, then tell them what they are going to do after the visit and when they will next be round.'*
- *'Don't be in a place you're not happy. Speak to your social worker and if they don't listen talk to someone else who will.'*
- *'Meetings that take place should be child friendly instead of formal, even if it means getting the young person to draw or colour what they feel.'*

2.9 Looked After Children

2.9.1 Children and young people living in residential children's homes (St Christopher's Fellowship) – May 2013 update

- (i) Young people living in St Christopher's homes were given the opportunity to participate in interviews about life in their homes and most did so. 100% felt safe, and the majority said they were happy in their homes. They had good placement stability and felt that they were receiving a good level of support with their education.
- (ii) Most young people were happy with the support they were receiving from care workers, who made them feel cared for. Relationships with staff contributed to young peoples' sense of stability.
- (iii) Issues identified included that some young people felt left out of

opportunities to participate in the life of the home, and few had close friends within it or a sense of optimism about their future (identified as stemming from gaps in transition planning as young people moved towards independence).

- (iv) The findings have contributed to revised performance monitoring of St Christopher's placements which capture young people's journeys and progress in greater detail. This evaluation also informed the retendering of the contract in 2014 and the development of new approaches to independence planning for Central Bedfordshire Looked After Children through the 'Passport to Independence' working group.

2.9.2 Looked After Children in out of area residential placements – December 2013 update

- (i) Looked After Children placed outside Central Bedfordshire were contacted through their registered homes managers and were offered the opportunity to be interviewed about their placement. A small number of children accepted.
- (ii) 100% felt safe and 75% felt happy in their homes. They had high attendance at school, better results and GCSE-level and post-education outcomes than young people placed with the commissioned provider at the time. Whilst their placements were less stable and emotional wellbeing measures poorer, this improved the longer they remained in placement. Like St Christopher's service users, they occasionally felt shut out of care and transition planning, and were unsure of how to have their say through organisations like the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS). They had developed good friendship networks within their homes, but felt that family contact could be an issue (especially for those placed some distance away).
- (iii) This evaluation informs a number of work streams e.g. Sufficiency Plan, ongoing monitoring and quality assurance of out of area placements, and the potential development of new residential provision within Central Bedfordshire to meet the needs of vulnerable young people closer to home.

2.9.3 Looked After Children receiving a service from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) - April 2014

- (i) Over a 4-month period, Looked After children and young people who were receiving a service from CAMHS were asked to complete an anonymous survey about their experiences. If they wanted to, they could also take part in a follow-up interview to explore their responses in more depth. Parents and carers were also surveyed.
- (ii) 83% of young people found this service helpful, and all had a good relationship with their key professional. For some, this therapeutic alliance was the best thing about CAMHS. Younger children were more likely to be satisfied with the service than (older) young people, and art therapy was service users' preferred delivery model. Greater outreach was needed and very few children, parents or carers were aware of the service prior to

referral by a social worker, so it could be difficult for them to know where to turn for issues around Looked after Children's mental and emotional wellbeing.

- (iii) The contract was retendered in 2014, with young people participating in the evaluation panel to commission a service that better meets their needs.

2.9.4 Children placed with in-house foster carers - January 2015

- (i) Children over the age of 4 placed with in-house foster carers were invited (with their social worker's consent) to give their feedback on being fostered either by attending a half-term activity session, or, with support, filling in a paper or online questionnaire.
- (ii) Initial findings indicate that all children who responded felt safe and happy in their placements. A key impact of this service was placement stability, which carers helped children achieve through good parenting routines and boundaries, broadening horizons and a sense of normal life. The majority were engaging well in education and had improved health and wellbeing. When asked what they would improve, most children responded with bigger, better foster homes, and more technology and takeaways! Some provision gaps were identified around older children's academic attainment (particularly at Key Stage 4) and preparation for independence.
- (iii) Once finalised the recommendations from this evaluation will be used to develop an action plan for ongoing improvement within the Fostering service, particularly around engaging children, young people and under-represented groups of carers in further participation opportunities and embedding their voices in service delivery.

2.9.5 Asylum Seeking Children and Young People

- (i) A group has been developed representing unaccompanied asylum seekers. Details below:

'Reach the Dream'* a group of young people representing unaccompanied asylum seekers

Regular Meetings with Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children – We started meeting in November and now meet every 6 weeks. 10 young people join in with interpreters. The manager and other workers come along as well.

Discussions – we talk about any problems we may have and workers explain how they can help

Consultation – ask about what we need like learning independence skills,

support with education, joining the gym, attending church in London.

Achievements – *we passed cycling proficiency tests and have had football coaching. A Personal Adviser from the Youth Support team talked to us about improving our grades. We go to church regularly. A teacher is now helping new learners with English. Some of us are going to start independence classes. A lady will be coming to talk to us about safe sex. The meetings are helpful.*

*'Reach the Dream' is the name given by young people for the group.

2.10 Children and supervised contact (Action for Children) – November 2013

2.10.1 Supervised Contact is a statutory provision often ordered by the courts against families' wishes. Due to its nature, it proved difficult to engage children and parents directly in an evaluation of this service. An alternative approach was sought where the provider collated data from service user feedback forms.

2.10.2 The evaluation found this service to be highly regarded by children and young people – 93% looked forward to their contact sessions. The majority liked their contact room and key workers, who were kind and helpful and made them feel safe. However, they wanted better venues, more time with parents and more contact with extended family members, as well as better games, more to do in contact centres and more age-appropriate activities.

2.10.3 The results of the evaluation informed the retendering of Supervised Contact provision in 2013, particularly the development of a clear outcomes framework for measuring families' progress. The new provider now delivers the service from two specially-purposed centres that have been refurbished in accordance with children's needs, wishes and feelings. Contact arrangements are also reviewed regularly, and children's wishes and feelings about contact are sought from social workers at these reviews.

2.11 Children who have used a National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) advocate or were matched with an Independent Visitor - April 2014

2.11.1 Advocates support young people in getting their views heard. They do not work for the Local Authority. Independent Visitors are volunteers who want to support and help children in care. They are there to listen and encourage young people to succeed in all aspects of their life.

2.11.2 Over a 4-month period, children and young people who had used a NYAS advocate or who were matched with an Independent Visitor were asked to complete an anonymous survey about their experiences. They could also

take part in a follow-up interview to explore their responses in more depth (none opted to take part in a follow-up interview).

2.11.3 Findings included:

- Less than a quarter of young people surveyed knew about NYAS before they were referred – hence none knew that they had a statutory right to this service and could also self-refer.
- All young people said it was easy to get an Independent Visitor once they were referred, but few said the same about advocates.
- That having a professional who would listen to them was the best thing about having an advocate, and that Independent Visitors helped broaden horizons, access the community and have fun. This had in turn improved confidence. Some gaps were identified in the Independent Visitor service – there were some difficulties in maintaining relationships when Looked After Children moved between placements.
- Young people also wanted the service to carry on post-18, and the opportunity to do more expensive activities with their visitors.

2.11.4 This report informed the retendering of the service in 2015 and the implementation of a new outcomes framework to capture children's journeys and the impact of the service in more detail. The new service specification also includes a duty on the provider to make all CBC Looked After Children are aware of their right to access this provision.

2.12 Children at risk of teenage pregnancy/risky sexual behaviours - January / February 2015

2.12.1 Young people (identified through schools) were asked to participate in interviews about using the Brook service. Although none knew about this provision before they were referred by a teacher, all participants had found the service helpful and would recommend it to a friend. The evaluation found that this provision was meeting a crucial need by giving young people someone to talk to about sexual and relationship issues independent of their school/home context. By forming a trusting relationship with a key professional, young people were given space to reflect on their situations and make positive changes, and were empowered to seek information and advice in the future from Brook's universal provision. This will inform the retendering of this contract in 2015/16.

2.13 Health related behaviour and perception survey - Schools Health Education Unit (SHEU) Survey

2.13.1 In Spring 2014 a health related behaviour and perception survey was carried out from a sample of year 6, 8 and 10 children in middle and upper schools.

2.13.2 A total of 3099 pupils took part from a total of 19 middle and upper schools.

2.13.3 The resulting data provided information about young people's lifestyles and health related behaviour and perceptions.

2.13.4 The Central Bedfordshire Children's Trust Board received an update on the survey results in December 2014 where headline results were reported - which showed an increase in low self-esteem amongst young people, but a decrease in smoking prevalence.

2.13.5

Data from 'A summary of a health-related behaviour and perception survey 2014'*

Pupils in Central Bedfordshire were less likely to get high self-esteem scores compared to the wider SHEU sample:

- Year 6: 35% Central Bedfordshire vs. 42% SHEU
- Year 8: 32% Central Bedfordshire vs. 38% SHEU
- Year 10: 28% Central Bedfordshire vs. 40% SHEU

Smoking

- Year 6: 97% of pupils said they have never tried smoking
- Year 8: 93% of pupils said they have never tried smoking
- Year 10: 71% of pupils said they have never tried smoking

* Report summary is available on the Children's Trust website
www.centralbedfordshirechildrenstrust.org.uk



3. Complaints and Compliments

3.1 A small number of complaints were received by Central Bedfordshire Council from Looked After Children. The young people who complained were concerned about their wishes and views being heard, the care and support they received.

3.2 The importance of hearing complaints directly from young people is recognised. Customer Relations and Corporate Parenting Service are working together to review and improve complaints practice including access for young people.

3.3 This work will include:

- raising awareness of the access to/value of complaints from young people
- engagement with young people, foster carers, partners and staff

including meeting with members of the Children in Care Council to review young people's experiences of the complaints procedure and seek views on how to improve.

- 3.4** Information on how to give feedback (compliments and complaints) will be on a new website for children in care.

What it can mean to be involved - feedback from a young care leaver

A young care leaver was recently invited to attend the Looked After Children Health Improvement Group, to give her experiences and views on the range of health services she had encountered. Her feedback, which centred around mental health services was well received by the group and will help to inform future actions. The young care leaver also gave feedback on her experience of attending the group via a Leaving Care Personal Advisor. The young person was extremely positive saying she felt that all of the professionals in the meeting really cared and were passionate about working with young people and developing services to best meet the needs of Looked After Children. She also stated that it made her think about her own experiences and better understand why certain decisions were made on her behalf realising that professionals do in fact care and "it's not just a job to some people".



4. Challenges and key issues identified

- 4.1** Key issues identified include:

- The importance of children on child protection and children in need plans having an established relationship with a social worker to enable them to express their wishes and feelings, reduce stigmas and empower them to have a voice that is listened to.
- The importance of building friendships and opportunities to participate in the life of residential homes.
- Support - transition to independent living.
- Importance of maintaining relationships when Looked After Children change placements, and the important role that placement stability plays in emotional wellbeing.
- Awareness raising of mental and emotional wellbeing services for Looked After Children (and wider universal provision).
- Self esteem issues identified through the SHEU survey.
- Ensuring join up and co-ordination of mental health services across schools.
- Awareness raising of independent visitor and advocates services.
- Raising awareness of the access to the complaints service.
- The importance of providing feedback to those who take the time to provide their views. (The Children in Care Council have on occasions

- not received feedback when completing consultations.)
- Determining how outcomes have been improved through the use of school councils.

4.2 Challenges include:

- Hearing children and young people's voices on sensitive issues such as domestic abuse, sexual abuse and bullying.
- Obtaining feedback from very young children.



5. Conclusion and Next Steps

5.1 Work is currently taking place on the development of an Active Participation Strategy. Active participation refers to children and young people having opportunities to have their voice heard but also opportunities to have real influence in decision-making and being empowered to make decisions for themselves.

5.2 In addition to the Active Participation Strategy, other pieces of work will enable children and young people's voices to be heard include:

- In October 2015, all schools will be invited to take part in a health related behaviour survey for children in years 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 focusing on their emotional health and wellbeing. Results will be collated into individual schools' reports and an overall Central Bedfordshire report which will help to shape future interventions.
- In October 2016, a general health survey will be made available to all schools with years 6, 8 and 10 which will enable trends to be identified in children and young people's perception of their own health related behaviours.
- The school nursing service will be capturing children and young people's views of their service throughout 2015/16. These views will be collated and used to improve the development of the service to meet pupils' and families' needs.

YOUTH AUDIT ACTION PLAN – REVIEW (April 2015)

INTRODUCTION

While youth involvement and participation have been priorities for young people's services for quite some time, more recently the government's 'Positive for Youth' (2013) policy has established the need for all local authorities to evidence the active involvement of young people in assessing the quality of local provision. As part of this approach, the government expects every local area to have a body of young people that is able to represent the views of local young people and audit the delivery and quality of local services.

The Central Bedfordshire Youth Audit (2013) was the first in the country to examine the commissioned Youth Offer services, which are provided on behalf of and by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC). In particular, the Youth Audit was asked to assess to what extent the Youth Offer translates from policy into practice. That they are the first to complete such efforts is testament to their abilities, as well as to CBC's commitment to making genuine youth involvement a reality.

In August 2014, the Youth Audit Team reviewed a number of agreed action plans arising from the original audit process. This included work delivered by Central Beds Council but also from externally commissioned providers. The findings and response to this review will be reflected in the updates below. It is anticipated a full audit of youth provision will take place in Summer 2015.

The level of partnership attained is demonstrated by the commitment of the Council to respond to the findings of the Youth Audit in a timely manner, and this action plan is the first step towards not only realising the aspirations of the young people taking part, but also to lay the foundations for future and further participative efforts. The following actions highlight the intentions of CBC to work with its partners in response to the Youth Audit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation One: Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) minimum standards adopted in all middle and upper schools

Issues:

- Current provision appears limited and needs to be more structured, preventative, uniformed and consistent.

- The Council's response to NEETs is good but more work is needed to identify potential NEETs earlier and prevent young people from becoming NEET in the first place;
 - 4YP is commissioned by CBC to deliver to post-16s when young people are already NEET
 - The pre-16 schools based (and schools-commissioned) provision is not universally delivered across all schools
 - The majority of people interviewed felt that IAG needed to be more structured, preventative, uniformed and consistent.

Actions

1. Promote schools responsibility to secure impartial IAG services in all middle and upper schools.
2. Promote the Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI) tool for use in all middle and upper schools
3. Engage all middle and upper schools and all relevant providers in establishing a minimum standard for IAG, based on DfE and Ofsted findings, particularly informed by the Inspiration Vision Statement.
4. Support all middle and upper schools to sign up to this minimum standard.

Recommendation Two: Expand the apprenticeship programme to be available to all young people

Issues:

- The targets that inform the efforts of schools often do not accommodate the efforts of the local authority – in particular, schools-based targets often focus on the attainment of GCSEs, while CBC is tasked with identifying those young people at risk of becoming NEET – which may result in CBC and schools applying their limited resources on different young people, which could work against a coordinated approach to the educational needs of the youth population.
- 60% of young people who are NEET reside in the Houghton Regis, Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard areas (identified as NEET 'hotspots').
- Systems in place to identify and support young people who are NEET are generally effective. However, maintaining current performance criteria when compared to regional, statistic and national performance measures remains challenging

Actions

1. Expand the LAC apprenticeship scheme to be more widely available to 16-24 year olds
2. Develop the RONI tool to identify those pre-16 young people who may be reluctant to participate in academic opportunities post-16, and promote apprenticeships to these young people

Recommendation Three: Positive Sexual and Relationship Education embedded from years 5/6

Issues:

- Facilities to promote Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) provision are becoming limited – particularly the work with young men
- A focus on early provision of emotional wellbeing support will encourage children and young people to increase their aspirations and contribute, and expect more from, their relationships
- Provision of Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) 'needs to be better' including from years 5/6 (Tier 1)
- Central Government have acknowledged the need for SRE provision to be updated and are happy for schools to engage with service providers ('experts') to develop services appropriate to their needs. In particular, the Sex Education Forum, the PSHE Association and Brook (a local provider in Central Bedfordshire) will soon be releasing new guidelines around teaching SRE
- As with many areas of preventative provision, it is difficult to definitively identify those young people at risk of being affected by teenage pregnancy (both as mothers and fathers). However, it is recognised that issues of low aspiration are common amongst those 'at risk'.
- It is felt that services are not delivered in a way that promotes confidentiality and this could increase the risk of teenage pregnancies
- Young people whose parents were themselves teenage parents are more likely to become teenage parents themselves

Actions

1. Review the priorities for SRE provision (YST and the Commissioning Team)
2. YST, the Commissioning Team, Public Health and schools to review current provision (the curriculum) of SRE and consider the forthcoming new recommendations
3. YST and the Commissioning Team to work with Brook and schools to identify ways of promoting confidentiality in the delivery of SRE – this may include online booking systems for young people and improved signage/promotion.

Recommendation Four: Provide a wider variety of personalised and matched volunteering opportunities, including a balance of long term, short term and one day opportunities

Issues:

- The opportunity to volunteer should be better promoted to ensure the maximum number of young people are able to benefit from this positive activity

Actions

1. Gather testimonials of young people who have volunteered with the existing Volunteering providers – CVS in the north and VCA in the south of the Central Bedfordshire area.
2. Include a volunteering target in all new contracts (as applicable) with commissioned providers. For example, this could be a target of 3 young people per year involved in a substantive volunteering opportunity (e.g. V10 or V50); applicable contracts would include – not exclusively - youth work

Recommendation Five: Improved and wider promotion of drug and alcohol services

Issues:

- There is a need to improve the promotion of provision in order to deliver better access to support and advice for those who need it.

Actions

1. Assess the quality and appropriateness of current promotional materials
2. Work with the Commissioned Services team to review current provision

Recommendation Six & Seven: Increase in accessible housing for homeless young people

Issues:

- The availability of appropriate beds for young people at risk of homelessness is extremely limited
- Many young people who experience homelessness also lack the skills to live independently, such as budgeting and cooking
- The recent Homeless Link report – ‘Young and Homeless 2013’ established that:
 - a. The main cause of homelessness (nearly 50%) amongst young people is family breakdown to the point that parents no longer want the child at home
 - b. Around half of homeless young people are NEET
 - c. The needs of young homeless people are becoming increasingly complex – increasing the case for early intervention and prevention of family breakdown and young people becoming NEET – particularly in an environment of increasingly scarce resources

Actions

1. Review Children’s Services (YST/Early Intervention/CSC) & Housing provision for 16 - 19 year olds deemed vulnerable
 - a. Can we define ‘sofa surfers’ as vulnerable?

- b. Understand their education, training and employment needs and identify / define their barriers to participation and feed these into joint plans
- c. Identify and track all homeless young people (including 'sofa surfers') and assess needs through YST – make referrals to commissioned providers / CSC / Troubled Families as appropriate. If developed, make referral through Partnership Triage (above) as a universal referral pathway that eradicates duplication / gaps in provision.

Recommendation Eight: Improved promotion of Youth Work and Positive Activities

Issues:

- The offer is good but poorly promoted
- Provision is focussed on the younger age group (12-14)
- Issues with poor behaviour

Actions

1. Behaviour protocols to be developed and agreed by YST/providers and young people

Recommendation Nine: Youth led young person's website and media strategy

Issues:

- Despite Central Bedfordshire having many opportunities for young people most have a lack of promotion
- Youth Audit Team suggest a stand-alone website from CBC's public website which would have age appropriate language and content
- It was recommended that the commissioned services engage with the internet and social media as a way to promote their services directly to young people

Actions

1. Update and develop the CBC section of website to include more relevant information and opportunities for young people
2. CBC Youth Voice in Youth Support to undertake social media training and identify young people to manage social networks for Youth Voice
3. Commissioned providers to use social media if not already

ACTION PLAN

The plan is monitored on a regular basis by the Youth Support Service and progress reported as requested to the appropriate boards and working groups.

| Recommendation 1 | IAG minimum standards adopted in all middle and upper schools <i>Youth Offer Theme – Information, Advice and Guidance</i> | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Actions | Lead | Deadline | Progress and Next Steps | RAG Rating |
| Promote schools responsibility to secure impartial IAG services in all middle and upper schools | James Dove & Rachel Felton | Sept 2014 (Upper schools) | <p>Promotion of the new Statutory Guidance (April 2014) has been delivered through the NEET Strategy Group (May 2014) and will be disseminated to all schools via the minutes. Revised guidance (April 15) will be promoted in due course.</p> <p>A new CEIAG network is being developed with schools and partners in order to develop and share best practice. This will be in place from June 2015 onwards.</p> | Green – Completed |
| Promote the Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI) tool for use in all middle and upper schools | James Dove & Rachel Felton | June 2014 | <p>All Upper schools are aware of the RONI and have received a data set to inform interventions/support. This has been replicated in 2015.</p> <p>The next stage of development will be to expand this to all Middle/Secondary schools & academies to ensure an accurate profile of young people in Years 7/8. This could inform more tailored careers advice to these age groups</p> | Green – Completed |
| Engage all middle and upper schools and all relevant providers in establishing a minimum standard for IAG, based on DfE and Ofsted findings, particularly informed by the DfE Inspiration Vision Statement | James Dove & Rachel Felton | April 2014 | IAG minimum standards have now been finalised and have been circulated to all Secondary/Upper schools. This process was delivered in partnership with school and academies. | Green – Completed |

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|--|----------------------------|---------------------|---|------------------------|
| Support all middle and upper schools to actively sign up to this minimum standard. | James Dove & Rachel Felton | Sept 2015 (Revised) | Focus has been on getting Upper / Secondary schools on board and as of Feb 2015 the majority are now on board. Focus groups to take place between May and July 2015 with young people in schools to establish their understanding of minimum standards and measure their satisfaction with IAG | Amber – Ongoing |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------|---|------------------------|

| Recommendation 2 | | Expand the apprenticeship programme to be available to all young people <i>Youth Offer Theme – Information, Advice and Guidance</i> | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------|
| Actions | Lead | Deadline | Progress and Next Steps | RAG Rating |
| Expand the LAC apprenticeship scheme to be more widely available to 16-24 year olds | CBC HR & CS/AS Workforce Development | Sept 2014 | The CBC Apprenticeship Scheme offers a guaranteed interview for Looked After Children but is widely accessible by all Young People. Our Workforce Development teams continue to promote a range of Apprenticeship and Traineeship opportunities for all Young People around Care professions. | Green – Completed |
| Develop the RONI tool to identify those pre-16 young people who may be reluctant to participate in academic opportunities post-16, and promote apprenticeships to these young people | Rachel Felton & Robert Higginson | June 2014 | As outlined in response to Recommendation 1 | Green – Completed |

| Recommendation 3 | | Positive Sexual and Relationship Education embedded from years 5/6 <i>Youth Offer Theme – Thematic Youth Support</i> | | |
|---|---|--|---|--------------------------|
| Actions | Lead | Deadline | Progress and Next Steps | RAG Rating |
| Review the priorities for SRE and positive relationship education provision | CBC Public Health, Paula Fleming & Lisa | April 2014 | The provision of SRE for years 5 and 6 is not compulsory and so delivery is inconsistent and patchy – with some schools and academies not delivering this at all to this age group. | Green – Completed |

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|---|--|-----------|--|--------------------------|
| | Wright | | CBC Public Health continues to facilitate a PSHE Network for all schools and academies in order to develop SRE / PSHE in schools. This includes promotion of national resources from established bodies such as the Sex Education Forum. | |
| YST, the Commissioning Team, Public Health and schools to review current provision (the curriculum) of SRE and consider the forthcoming new recommendations from The Sex Education Forum, the PSHE Association and Brook – when published | CBC Public Health, Paula Fleming & Lisa Wright | June 2014 | Please see above | Green – Completed |
| YST and the Commissioning Team to work with Brook to identify ways of promoting confidentiality in the delivery of SRE – this may include online booking systems for young people and improved signage/promotion | CBC Public Health, Paula Fleming & Lisa Wright | June 2014 | <p>For school based Sex and Relationship provision delivered by Brook, it has not been possible to change the locations/times of clinics due to limits on physical space and timetables delivered across different schools. However, Public Health will now be looking at whether young people have an appropriate level of confidential access to Sexual Health services. This research will be taking place shortly and YSS will request views of the audit team and young people are considered in full.</p> <p>There is also an acknowledgement that services should continue to be delivered in schools as this makes them accessible to some of the most vulnerable young people who could perhaps struggle to access off-site services (perhaps due to transport or other issues). This is also seen as a way of challenging the stigma often associated with SRE services.</p> | Green – Completed |

| Recommendation 4 | Provide a wider variety of personalised and matched volunteering opportunities, including a balance of long term, short term and one day opportunities <i>Youth Offer Theme – Youth Work and Positive Activities</i> | | | |
|--|--|-----------------|---|--------------------------|
| Actions | Lead | Deadline | Progress to date and next steps | RAG rating |
| Include a volunteering target in all new contracts (as applicable) with commissioned providers. For example, this could be a target of 3 young people per year involved in a substantive volunteering opportunity (e.g. V10 or V50); applicable contracts would include – not exclusively - youth work | James Dove and CVS | March 2015 | The requirement to support volunteers has been included in all new YSS commissioned services. The new volunteering service for Young People also has clearer requirements to generate volunteering opportunities for disengaged young people. | Green – Completed |
| Gather testimonials of young people who have volunteered with the existing Volunteering providers – CVS in the north and VCA in the south of the Central Bedfordshire area | James Dove and CVS/VCA | Sept 2014 | Case studies are already provided as part of the quarterly monitoring process and can be shared on request. | Green – Completed |

| Recommendation 5 | Improved and wider promotion of drug and alcohol services <i>Youth Offer Theme – Thematic Youth Support</i> | | | |
|---|---|-----------------|---|--------------------------|
| Actions | Lead | Deadline | Progress to Date and Next Steps | RAG Rating |
| Assess the quality and appropriateness of current promotional materials | CBC Public Health, Paula Fleming, CAN YP and James Dove | Sept 2014 | The main drugs and alcohol commission has been awarded to CAN YP with a re-focus on Tier 1 delivery in schools to promote preventative education. This includes a requirement to develop new promotional materials/packs which have been developed. | Green – Completed |
| Work with Commissioned | CBC Public | Sept 2014 | The main drugs and alcohol commission has been awarded | Green – Completed |

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|--------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Services to review current provision | Health, Paula Fleming, CAN YP and James Dove | | to CAN YP with a re-focus on Tier 1 delivery in schools to promote preventative education. The existing contract runs till March 2016 and is currently being reviewed. | |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|

| Recommendation 6 & 7 | | Increase in accessible housing for homeless young people and the Council to recognise sofa surfers as vulnerable young people <i>Youth Offer Theme – Targeted Youth Support</i> | | |
|---|--|---|--|----------------------|
| Actions | Lead | Deadline | Progress and Next Steps | RAG Rating |
| Review Children’s Services (YST/Early Intervention/CSC) & Housing provision for 16 - 19 year olds deemed vulnerable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can we define ‘sofa surfers’ as vulnerable? • Understand their education, training and employment needs and identify / define their barriers to participation and feed these into joint plans • Identify and track all homeless young people (including ‘sofa surfers’) and assess needs through YSS – make referrals to commissioned providers / CSC / Supported Families as appropriate. If developed, make | James Dove and Access & Referral Hub Manager | July 2015 | Work on housing and homelessness has been slow to develop. However, the following work has taken place; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The YSS are working with Signposts in Dunstable to support up to 10 young people who are homeless. This support is focused on enabling young people to take ownership of their lives and access Employment, Education and Training • The Housing and Mediation Service work with young people aged 14 and above who are at risk of becoming or who are homeless. This service works closely with Social Workers to help the most vulnerable young people. They are currently making some changes to what they do and they would welcome a visit as part of the next youth audit | Red – Ongoing |

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|--|--|--|--|--|
| referrals through Partnership Triage ('The Hub') (above) as a universal referral pathway that eradicates duplication / gaps in provision | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|

| Recommendation 8 | Improved promotion of Youth Work and Positive Activities Youth Offer Theme – Youth Work and Positive Activities | | | |
|--|--|-----------------|--|--------------------------|
| Actions | Lead | Deadline | Progress to Date and Next Steps | RAG Rating |
| Behaviour protocols to be developed and agreed by YSS/Providers and young people | James Dove, Lisa Wright and Providers | Sept 2014 | Providers have now developed behaviour protocols. The YSS will continue to monitor through the inspection and monitoring systems | Green – Completed |

| Recommendation 9 | Youth led young person's website and media strategy | | | |
|---|--|-----------------|---|--------------------------|
| Actions | Lead | Deadline | Progress and Next Steps | RAG Rating |
| Update and develop the CBC section of website to include more relevant information and opportunities for young people | James Dove | Sept 2014 | The CBC website has been updated but is not an appropriate platform to share details of services for Young People. A new communications strategy for the YSS is being developed which will include a web presence and social media platform | Red – Ongoing |
| CBC Youth Voice in Youth Support to undertake social media training and identify young people to manage social networks for Youth Voice | Lisa Wright | Sept 2014 | Staff and young people have undertaken training with CBC Communications, social media platforms active are Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and You Tube, and a WordPress BLOG. In the main posts to these platforms are managed by trained young people but content is overseen and regularly checked by a named member staff. | Green – Completed |
| Commissioned providers to use social media if not already | Lisa Wright and Providers | Nov 2014 | Most providers are actively using Twitter and Facebook and interact with each other to promote and share opportunities and information with young people. | Green – Completed |