

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee/Panel:	Corporate Parenting Board
Date:	30 September 2019
Title:	Updates on Children in Care / Participation
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That the Corporate Parenting Board note the update on the current focus of working practices for Officers working with Children in Care.

2. Summary

- 2.1 This report focuses on the period since 01 June 2019 and provides a brief overview of the Participation Officer's progression of work over the last three months.

3. Future Direction

- 3.1. Children's Social Care will continue to work to improve outcomes for Children in Care.
- 3.2 This report provides an update on the progress of Participation for Children in Care across Hampshire Children's Services. The progress is being measured against the Participation Strategy. The Participation agenda is embedded within practice across the teams and districts and a culture of creating an inclusive "You Said, We Did" continues.

4. Participation Leads

- 4.1 The Participation Officer continues to support the Children in Care Teams across the county with the participation agenda. The Participation Officer has chaired two district participation meetings in each of the four quadrants. Each quadrant consists of two districts.

Districts	Quadrants
Fareham and Gosport Havant	South East Quadrant
East Hampshire Hart and Rushmoor	North East Quadrant
Basingstoke Test Valley	North West Quadrant
New Forest Eastleigh Winchester	South West Quadrant

4.2 The participation meetings have included participation team leads from Children in Care Teams, Residential Services, the Fostering Service and the Independent Reviewing Service, Care Leavers Teams and these meetings have included the district teams. The meetings have provided a platform to share ideas for participation and continues to build on a collaborative strength-based approach central to the ethos of the Hampshire Approach.

4.3 Eleven District and Service participation leads met for an away day on 05 September 2019 to share best practice and to plan for the participation conference that will take place on 31 October 2019. The leads were introduced to the Evolve risk assessment tool which will support with the safe implementation for the increasingly adventurous participation activities that the teams are setting up for their children and young people.

5. Care Ambassadors

5.1 The Participation Officer continues to support the recruitment of Care Ambassadors at both a local, service and county level. The local groups are beginning to establish, and the North East quadrant have five young people who meet regularly, of which two attended the County Group meeting on 02 September 2019 with the Corporate Parenting Board and the Director and Assistant Director of Childrens Services. The Participation Officer will directly support the County Group and support the quadrant participation leads with the promotion and support of the Care Ambassadors a local level. The Participation Officer is supporting the Service groups which are in the early stages of recruitment.

5.2 The Participation Officer coordinated and took part in the first Corporate Parenting Board 'Influencers group' on 06 September 2019. This is a group of Children in Care who are under 18 years old and therefore unable to be

representatives in Corporate Parenting Board meetings. The Participation Officer will support this group to meet with the Corporate Parenting Board outside of the Corporate Parenting Board meetings and will promote their views. They will also provide their views and feedback to the Care Ambassadors. The Participation Officer hopes that these children will eventually become Care Ambassadors once they reach 18 years of age and two of these young people have formally expressed an interest in becoming a member of the Corporate Parenting Board.

- 5.3 The Participation Officer has met with Children and Young People in care across the districts and found some common themes in that:
- Children in care would like to be involved with interviews for staff.
 - Children in care would like to share their own story to social work staff.
 - Children in care would like to access a therapeutic group.
- 5.4 A group of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) continue to meet in London. This group is facilitated by a Personal Assistant from the South East Care Leavers Team supported by a Social Worker from the South East Children in Care Team and a Social Worker from the Havant Children in Care Team. A representative from this group of young people attended the County Group meeting on 02 September 2019 with the Corporate Parenting Board and the Director and Assistant Director of Children's Services. This young person has expressed an interest in becoming a Care Ambassador representative on the Corporate Parenting Board. Another Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children group has been set up by the Basingstoke Children in Care Team and this group also meets in London.
- 5.5 The Participation Officer has been liaising with the Service Lead for Disabled Children's Teams to explore a Care Ambassador group and representation from disabled children. It has been agreed that the Participation Officer will support the formation of a group or groups in schools that disabled children attend as this may be a more facilitating environment for these groups to flourish.
- 5.6 The Participation Officer is in the early stages of supporting the formation of a Care Ambassador group from children's residential homes. The Participation Officer has met with residential home managers to discuss the representation of children and young people from the residential homes.
- 5.7 The Participation Officer is exploring the possibility of forming a Care Ambassador group from children in care living in Out of County placements. The group would be facilitated using social media such as SKYPE. The

Participation Officer is currently seeking guidance about the use of SKYPE with these children before taking this forward.

6. Introduction to care leaflets and video

- 6.1 The 'Introduction to care' for under 14's leaflet is in the final stages of completion following feedback from young people. The leaflet has now been signed off and is awaiting just one last amendment with the designers. The design team will now focus on the leaflet for over 14's. Once the leaflets are complete they will be made available to Social Workers who can use them as an additional resource to inform and support children who may be coming into care.
- 6.2 The 'Introduction to care', an animated video, is due to start production. This will be a further resource alongside the Introduction to care leaflet that Social Workers can use to reassure and support children coming into care. The leaflet will provide information and the animated video will offer reassurance. The Hampshire Cultural Trust have supported the Participation Officer to identify a video company to produce the video. The Video Company have agreed to produce the video animation for less than half the usual cost. The video script was sent out to participation leads for consultation to children in care and staff.
- 6.3 The Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) group have already completed a 'Welcome to Hampshire' leaflet which has been approved by senior managers. This leaflet has been signed off and is being finished by the design team. The leaflet will be published first in English and then it will be available in five languages identified as the most commonly spoken languages for UASC in Hampshire. This will be a valuable resource for Social Workers working with separated young people who have recently arrived in Hampshire and are seeking asylum.
- 6.4 Fostering Services have involved children and young people in care in delivering training to potential foster carers. Children and young people are also part of fostering panels.
- 6.5 The Independent Reviewing Service have appointed Andrew Beard in the role of the Participation Lead Officer for the Service. In response to children and young people's views, the Independent Reviewing Service have adapted how they record meetings and now record as if talking directly to the child.

7. Participation Events

- 7.1 Seven districts have recorded eleven events from 01 June 2019 to date with 167 children and young people and 135 parents and carers taking part. Fareham and Gosport and Hart and Rushmoor have organised large scale events that have included Children in Care.
- 7.2 Residential Services recently arranged several participation activities for their children. Several young people engaged in a variety of activities including kayaking, camping, visits to Thorpe Park and one group of three children visited Disneyland for a week-long holiday. Each of these opportunities were arranged in response to the wishes and feelings of the children. Each home records how the children have shaped the service in a folder that they keep in each home.
- 7.3 The Participation Officer recently attended Fareham and Gosport and Havant Olympic participation day. Each team arranged an activity and arranged for children to be present including Children in Care. There was a huge number of participants and a variety of fun and exciting activities and the day had a real buzz of excitement about it with children and staff clearly enjoying themselves.
Please see the video of the event <https://vimeo.com/357322307> (password is Participation).
- 7.4 The Participation Officer attended the Big Adventure Week run by the Hampshire Futures Team for children in care, which ran all week from 05 to 09 August. Four Hampshire Outdoor Centres were involved enabling four week-long residential arrangements with twenty children staying in each centre. The children and Children's Services staff had the opportunity to try a variety of activities and this provided an opportunity to get to know one another.
- 7.5 These events have provided the Participation Officer with a rich source of in-depth interviews and insight into the day to day experiences of children in care as well as their views about the service they receive. The Participation Officer has provided a sample of the numerous quotes from the children and young people gathered during these events:

10 year old child in care to the Participation Officer.... "Thank you so much for talking to us. This has been the best part of the whole week for me."

20 year old young mum: "More things like this. More little events. I think a lot of people in care get a lot of mental health issues and little events like this do help. Now I am living on my own and whenever my PA mentioned it I thought, do you know what, it gets me out. I just mentioned to her it would be nice having more older people not just with the little ones. Yes, more people should know about this and there should be more events like this."

60 year old Nan / carer: "I cannot fault my grandson's social worker. Her and the Children in Care team in Fareham and Gosport. But, his social worker is second to none. They are just brilliant. When 'X' was kicking off, and he is a big lad, two of them came and supported me. One took the child and the other took me. There was no need to do that. It was above and beyond."

60 year old Foster carer: "I have noticed a change in the last year. Especially from my support workers. They are more on it and attentive."

7.6 The main themes over that past three months regarding 'you said' and 'we did' are listed below.

You said	We did
"The children feel they are listened to but sometimes the number of meetings are frustrating."	
"We liked that the manager joined in the participation event as we normally only see her at meetings. We liked how much effort has been put into the day as there is a lot going on."	
"I really enjoyed the activities, especially the slime and graffiti art." "A child was scared of dogs prior to the event, we had a PAT (therapy dog) on site, who calmed the nerves of the child and made him feel more comfortable around animals." "Feel more confident." "I like talking to my [FSW name]." 	

<p>One family said they have not been out of the house for 6 weeks, this is the first thing they have come to. This has built up their confidence to get out of the house and become independent again.</p>	
<p>“My social worker listens to us and our mum and will talk to all of us.”</p> <p>“My social worker listens to me and helps me to sort the problem.”</p> <p>The children said social workers: ”They help the children that are scared. They help to get worries out of their heads.”</p> <p>“They make sure you are fed properly and make sure you are happy.”</p> <p>“They help you from being hurt. They help you if you get it wrong.”</p> <p>The Children were asked if they like seeing their social worker at school: “yes, I like when my social worker comes to see me in school because you can tell them the worries you have. I like seeing them both at school and home.”</p> <p>“Yes, I like it when they come to see me at school because I get bullied at school. Sometimes I have a bump in my hair and other people in my class are horrible to me about it, so when I see my social worker it gets me out of lesson and away from being bullied.”</p> <p>“I don’t like it when they come to school.”</p> <p>“The social worker helps when they come to school. They show you</p>	<p>We have listened to the views of the children and understand that they like direct work and some of the children enjoy visits in school.</p>

pictures of animals with funny faces and you can tell them how you are feeling.”	
“It was good fun and I am glad I came.” “Was a long train journey from London but I had a nice time.”	
Young people and carers said they appreciated the ‘free event’ at the end of the summer when money was short, and families needed a bit of support.	
Events in school term do not work well as families struggle to juggle competing needs of family life. Future events should be in school holidays.	We will arrange events in the school holidays.
More events like this. If the family attends, then the allocated Social Worker should attend also. More food requested as the children enjoyed this.	We will plan the next event to include the feedback and to amend the feedback forms to get more useful feedback.

8. Next Steps

8.1 The language that we use

The language that we use is a key theme from participation events. The Participation Officer acknowledges that we need to consider changes to our language within review documents, care plans, visit records and our verbal dialogue with children and their families. Such information crosses many aspects of the department, for example within our guidance, policies and procedures. The language we use is currently being developed and the Participation Officer is coordinating feedback from children and young people and from staff regarding what language our children and young people would like us to use.

9. Conclusion

9.1 The last three months has been a busy and productive time for the Participation Officer. The Participation Officer has found that feedback from our Children in Care evidences that generally there are positive relationships between children and their parents/carers and Children’s Services staff. There is a strong sense of children and their families being well supported by

staff and the department. Working relationships between staff and children and their families are generally viewed as authentic, open and positive. The teams have organised some creative and exciting events which have provided some rich feedback from children and their families.

- 9.2 The Participation Officer is particularly excited about the progress of the Care Ambassadors as a group and the enthusiasm from the Participation leads in facilitating involvement of Care Ambassadors as participants in the Corporate Parenting Board or as 'influencers.
- 9.3 Going forward the Participation Officer will continue to support the Participation leads for the Children in care Teams. The Participation Officer will also continue to support staff with resources such as the Introduction to care leaflet and video and the Welcome to Hampshire leaflet. The Participation day has been organised for 31 October 2019 and this will be another opportunity to ensure that participation remains high on the agenda and remains creative, fun and focused.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	No
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	No
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes
OR	
This proposal does not link to the Strategic Plan but, nevertheless, requires a decision because:	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Location

None

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

See guidance at <https://hants.sharepoint.com/sites/ID/SitePages/Equality-Impact-Assessments.aspx?web=1>

Insert in full your **Equality Statement** which will either state:

- (a) *why you consider that the project/proposal will have a low or no impact on groups with protected characteristics or*
- (b) *will give details of the identified impacts and potential mitigating actions*