

# HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Report

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| <b>Panel:</b>       | Corporate Parenting Board                    |
| <b>Date:</b>        | 8 November 2023                              |
| <b>Title:</b>       | Update on Participation Action Plan for 2023 |
| <b>Report From:</b> | Director of Children's Services              |

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### Purpose of this Report

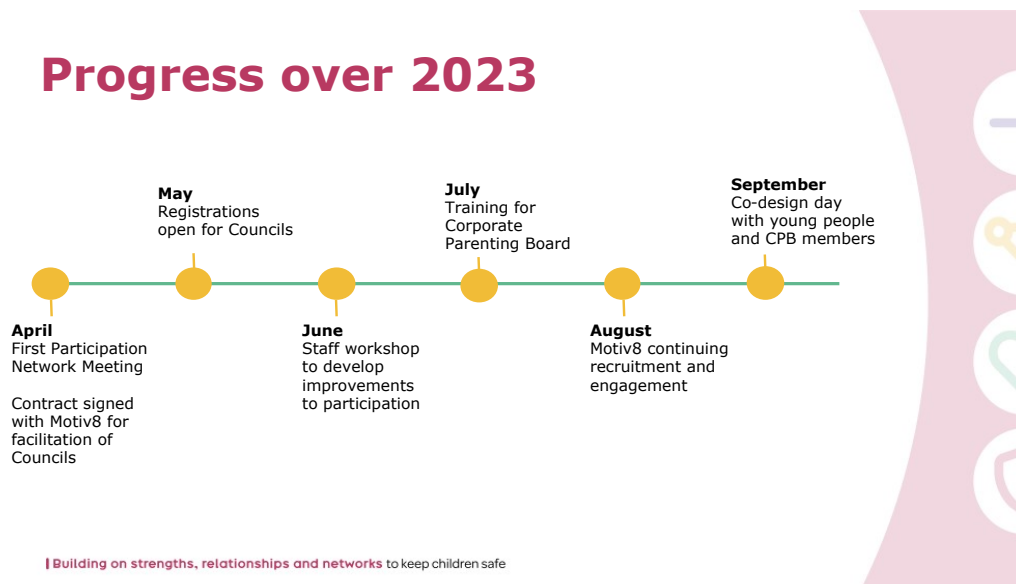
1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Participation Action Plan for 2023, including the development of the Children in Care and Care Experienced Adults Councils.
2. This report also outlines a series of recommendations for the next phase of development.

### Recommendation

3. That the Corporate Parenting Board note the update on the Participation Action Plan for 2023.

### Part 1: Progress against Participation Action Plan

4. The Participation Action Plan continues to be delivered as scheduled throughout 2023. The Corporate Parenting Board are well briefed in the elements of the plan and the following slide highlights the key milestones over the past six months:



## **Development of the Children in Care and Care Experienced Adults Councils**

5. We continue to work closely with Motiv8 during the mobilisation period to ensure they are linked with operational teams and that we are developing the Councils in an agile way. To date 17 Care Experienced Adults and 13 Children in Care have volunteered to be part of the Councils, but a larger cohort have registered their interest and are engaging in a more informal way.
6. Our learning from the initial stages of the project is that it is helpful to view the Councils as an 'umbrella' for all our children in and leaving care. Young people are telling us that they want to contribute in a flexible way, for example through the social media pages set up for this purpose, via the dedicated Youth Worker for the programme, or via events and activities.
7. It may be that we move away from the term 'Councils' in time, and as the participants develop their own model and ways of working.
8. The contract manager for the contact meets fortnightly with Motiv8 to ensure the development of the Councils remain on track.

### **Co-design day, 16 September**

9. The co-design day at Winchester Arc Library in September was a great success. 9 young people were able to join us, and they must be credited by their enthusiasm and desire to make a difference for other children in care. Thank you to those Councillors who were able to join us, as together we covered a wide range of topics and the conversation contributed towards the recommendations contained in the second section of this report.

### **Participation Network**

10. The new Participation Network, comprising of staff from across Children Services who play a role in running events and activities, continues to grow. This group meets 6 weekly and provides an opportunity to showcase our work, learn and share resources and promote our focus on 'you said, we did'.
11. The Corporate Parenting Board should also note that an informal network of those involved in Participation has just been set up for Local Authorities in the South East. The first meeting has taken place, and it was interesting to learn of the similar challenges and opportunities shared by our peers in neighbouring authorities. We will continue to play a role in this network to share learning and potentially work towards some joint initiatives.

## **Part 2: Recommendations for the continuous improvement of Participation in Hampshire**

12. The work that has taken place over the course of the year has contributed towards the following recommendations, this includes
  - a. Feedback from children and young people, collated via the Councils
  - b. Staff feedback during a cross-branch workshop
  - c. Contributions from Participation Network Members
  - d. Research and learning from other Local Authorities

- e. Training and advice from Total Respect who are experts in child advocacy
- f. Feedback from the Corporate Parenting Board

**Priority areas identified by young people**

13. The following priority areas were identified by young people as areas of focus for the Corporate Parenting Board and the Directorate. It is important to note that there will be a range of priorities that the Board and the Directorate will focus on, not just those identified by young people.
14. The table includes a range of example activities which could be taken forward with young people and Corporate Parenting Board Members. These examples are indicative at this point, to illustrate how we convert feedback into action. We are developing a detailed programme plan together with Motiv8 and our operational teams to ensure that young people are part of the solutions we create.
15. During the Corporate Parenting Board discussion it will be useful to understand from Members which areas of work they would like to contribute to.

| <b>Area</b>  | <b>Types of activities which could be delivered</b>   |
|--|---|
| Reduce stigma for children in care and care leavers  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources and training for schools on life in care</li> <li>• Further consideration of how we use language and labels</li> </ul>   |
| Develop a transparent and accountable way of communicating and responding to children and young people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of Challenge Cards</li> <li>• More flexible communication with Care Leavers recognising they are adults</li> <li>• A policy for how and when we'll respond to young people</li> </ul> |
| Recognise and support individuals and their aspirations  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer and/or specialist mentoring</li> <li>• Development of support and activity networks based on areas of interest</li> </ul>   |
| Review and improve housing options for 16 plus.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further work internally and with Housing Partners to enhance our offering.</li> </ul>  |

**A more systematic approach to collating and responding to feedback**

16. There are currently many points at which we gather feedback from children, young people and families. Understanding the views and wishes of those we work with is fundamental to good social work practice, and it is woven into all we do. In addition to 'individual' feedback we gather, we also request 'service' feedback – either through feedback forms, audits, surveys or participation events.
17. However, there is an opportunity to streamline how we do this, and in doing so introduce a more robust baseline of data which can be used to track how our families experience our service over time. Our suggestion is that 'less is more' when it comes to service feedback, and that by being smarter and more coordinated we hope to improve both the quality and quantity of responses.

18. We are also seeking to coordinate the events that are run across the service. The Corporate Parenting Board are aware of our strategy that 'participation is everyone's business', hence activities being devolved to local teams. We are now seeking to introduce some service wide initiatives which will provide a 'hook' for local activity, again ensuring better coordination and impact.
19. As the Corporate Parenting Board are aware, a key priority for us is the 'feedback loop' and that gathering feedback is only the first step in meaningful participation. It is essential we action the feedback we receive (ideally together with young people and families) and that we respond to it.

### **Feedback fortnight 2x year**

Introduce a feedback fortnight, potentially straddling a half term. This would include:

- Simple feedback form with 3 questions, potentially adapted for team but aim to keep as generic as possible i.e. 'I felt heard'
- Feedback requested at all meetings, conferences, reviews during the fortnight (anonymous)
- Feedback request link included in all staff signatures (anonymous)
- Meet the manager sessions with senior managers and Corporate Parenting Board Members
- Participation events delivered by local teams, with opportunities to develop service improvements
- A response at the end of the month with what we've heard, and what we're doing next (could be video, animation for example)

### **My Life My Future Month**

A month of focus on children in care and care leavers. Activities would include:

- A survey exploring what life is like for CIC / CL (replacing Bright Spots)
- Associated participation events and CIC/CEA Council activities
- Involvement of Corporate Parenting Board and Senior Managers
- A response at the end of the month with what we've heard, and what we're doing next (could be video, animation for example)

### **My Life My Future Awards**

- Introduce an annual awards ceremony for our children in and leaving care
- Could form part of the month above.

### **Challenge Cards**

- Introduce a challenge card, for example 'START, STOP, CHANGE'. When the idea has enough support (i.e. 4 votes for example) that 'challenge' is sent to the Corporate Parenting Board who will respond directly to the young person.

20. In introducing these activities and events (alongside the work happening locally and within the new Councils) we will 'supercharge' our participation and provide far more opportunities for young people to meaningfully contribute towards the development of their service.

## **The evolution of the Corporate Parenting Board**

21. During the co-design event, participants discussed the make-up of the Corporate Parenting Board and the way in which it hears and responds to children and young people.
22. Members already have an opportunity to observe practice and attend events and we recommend continuing this and also providing more opportunities including visiting residential homes. This is in addition to the recommendations in the previous section, where we envisage Members contributing towards 'feedback fortnight' and 'My Life My Future' Month.
23. We would also like to explore with Members how they can best contribute towards developing solutions. For example, forming part of a working group with Officers and young people. Another alternative may be taking actions to progress areas of priority where they are best placed to do so, whether that be collaborating with District Councils or other partners.
24. Motiv8 will be providing the Board with a feedback summary at each meeting, and as the Councils become more established we would seek to introduce a regular opportunity for Members to attend Council meetings and events.
25. The Corporate Parenting Board may also want to consider producing a 'newsletter' or other summary of the discussion following each meeting which can be shared with the Councils, closing the feedback loop and evidencing that their voices have been heard and responded to.

## **Conclusions**

26. There has been positive progress under the Action Plan this year, and we are excited by the momentum that is building as we grow our approach to participation. However, we are not complacent as there is a significant amount of work we need to deliver over the coming year and beyond. However, we will continue to focus on building strong foundations for gathering and responding to feedback as by doing so the structures will be in place to ensure meaningful opportunities for all our young people.
27. We ask the Corporate Parenting Board to approve the recommendations outlined in this report, and we welcome the opportunity for discussion about the contents during the Board meeting in November.

## **Consultation and Equalities**

28. The Participation Action Plan is designed to provide further opportunities for consultation with children, families and staff. Equality impact was considered as part of the procurement of the CIC and CEA Councils and is an ongoing consideration in the development of our recommendations.

## **Climate Change Impact Assessment**

29. There are no climate change implications to this report.

## CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION

### Links to the Strategic Plan

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:</b>  | Yes |
| <b>People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:</b>   | Yes |
| <b>People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:</b>   | Yes |
| <b>People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:</b>  | Yes |
| <b>OR</b>  |     |
| <b>This proposal does not link to the Strategic Plan but, nevertheless, requires a decision because: This report is for information only</b> |     |

#### **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.

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### **2. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

An updated EIA will be produced as part of the recommendations from this project.