

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee/Panel:	Corporate Parenting Board
Date:	12 June 2019
Title:	Children in Care Participation Update
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 January 2019 and provides a brief overview of the Participation Officer progression of work over the last six 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 across Hampshire Children's Services. The progress is being measured against the Participation Strategy which has been in place since 2017. The Participation agenda is embedded within practice across the teams and districts and a culture of creating an inclusive "You Said, We Did" is developing.
- 3.3 The Participation Officer continues to support the districts across the county with the participation agenda. The Participation Officer has scheduled district participation meetings for the year combining two

districts within four areas (quadrants) of Hampshire these are the North West, North East, South East, South West (working title Quads). There will be four meetings per quarter. In addition, The Participation Officer will meet with District Participation leads following district peer inspections. Inter team and inter district collaboration for participation is being encouraged. These meetings will provide an opportunity to share good practice and ensure that 'you said- we did' remains in focus and that there is a clear direction regarding participation in all its forms.

4. Care Ambassadors

- 4.1 There is a plan to recruit at least four care ambassadors from each quadrant, this will work out about two Care Ambassadors per district. Each quadrant will be led by a Care Leaver Personal Advisor and a Child in Care social worker. At this time the South East and the North East Care Ambassador groups are set to meet for the first time during the May half-term. The North West quadrant is due to have it's opening meeting on the 27 June 2019 an unfortunate delay due to unforeseen circumstances. Care Ambassadors should be inclusive, and the Participation Officer is committed to representation from Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, Disabled Children and Children in care in Residential home.
- 4.2 The Participation Officer has met with a group of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) is currently meeting in Croydon. This group supported by Kay Castonguay Personal Advisor, South East Care Leavers Team is supported by two Social Workers from the South East Children in Care Team and South West Children in Care Team respectively. The Participation Officer has potentially recruited three young people who are interested in representing UASC as Care Ambassadors.
- 4.3 The Participation Officer is particularly keen to have Young People with Disabilities representatives as Care Ambassadors. The Participation Officer has sent the Care Ambassador profile to the Service Lead for Disabled Children's Teams and sent a direct request to Team Managers for Disabled Young People representatives to be put forward as Care Ambassadors across the districts.

5. Introduction to care leaflets and video

- 5.1 Feedback has been received from some young people regarding the 'Introduction to care' leaflet. The leaflet is now with the designers and is due to be completed in June. Once the leaflet is approved it will be available to Social Workers who can use it as an additional resource to inform and support children who may be coming into care. An 'Introduction to care' video will also be produced to provide further support to children coming into care. The Participation Officer is currently liaising with video companies prior to commissioning the production of the video with children, young people and Social Workers.
- 5.2 The UASC group have already completed a Welcome to Hampshire leaflet which has been approved by senior managers. This leaflet is currently being completed by the design team. The leaflet will be assessible to Social Workers 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 will have recently arrived in Hampshire and seeking asylum.

6. Peer Inspections

- 6.1 The Participation Officer will attend all Peer Inspections and has taken part in inspections for Basingstoke, Fareham and Gosport, New Forest, East Hants and the Isle of Wight.
- 6.2 The Participation Officer has met with all the teams that have been inspected this year. These meetings have included District Managers, and Participation leads and provided an opportunity for sharing participation practice and learning.

7. Participation Events

- 7.2 All eight districts have recorded eighteen events from 01 January 2018 to date with 254 children and young people and 31 parents and carers taking part. The main themes over that past six month regarding 'you said' and 'we did' are:

You Said	We did
There are positive relationships with parents and children and children's services staff;	
There are positive relationships with parents and children and children's services staff;	

There is a strong sense of being well supported by staff and the department;	
Working relationships between staff and children and their families are viewed as authentic	
More regular contact with siblings;	
More notice of any changes such as a new Social Worker;	
Make meeting rooms more child friendly	
I would rather answer this via email as I don't like talking on the phone.	We E-mailed it to you
We would like more participation events and activities like this;	
I like the opportunity to meet with other families with children with Disabilities;	
We really appreciate the support and relationships with Childrens Services;	
Could we tighten up on cover for Social Worker absences;	We reviewed duty rota system to ensure Social Worker absences are covered.
Direct payments not always paid on time.	If there is an issue regarding direct payments the allocated worker will discuss this during visits and will resolve the problem.
You would like toys in meeting and contact rooms, more colourful, paper and pens in rooms, photos of the rooms prior to the meetings.	We contacted Facilities Management to make the changes requested by the children and young people using in the meeting rooms.
More information about my social worker, photos of the managers so that children know who they are talking about.	

8. Engagement Events

Engagement events are projects that demand a level of commitment from the young people involved. These events can be stepping stones to groups or other committed roles for the young people. In the first half of this year we have had two significant Events

8.1 **The Havant ICE Project**

Seven young people and two social workers spent ten evenings together in Havant developing and preparing a performance piece that explored what it is like to be rendered voiceless. It also explored the relationship between young person and social worker from both the child and the social workers point of view. They performed their piece to an audience of around 200 people at the Point Theatre in Eastleigh. The piece was well received and appreciated on the night. The young people gained a level one arts award as part of the project

8.2 **Changing Schools Video**

Four young people (one from the Isle of Wight) took part in a video project that explains what school can be like for a child in care. It describes what life might be like for a child in care that the child may have travelled an hour to get to school, that the placement can sometimes be unsettled and that relationships with other young people can be difficult when you feel ashamed to say you are in care. The video was presented to the designated teachers conference in March with the young people introducing a workshop around the video these workshops were the big highlight of the day.

9. **Next Steps**

9.1 **The language that we use**

The language that we use is a key theme from participation. We recognise that the use of language is important, this links to the relationship's workers build with young people. Our children and young people have also asked us if we can change the language we use for example can:

- Re-unification be changed to *'my journey home'* or *'return to family'*.
- Looked After being changed to *Care for*,
- Core group meeting be changed to *About me meeting*,
- Participation Groups be changed to *'a talk that could improve'*,
- Contact be changed to *Family time*,
- Social worker changed to *A person who helps with problems*.

9.2 We do need to consider changes to our language within review documents, care plans, visit records and our verbal dialog with children and their families. Such information crosses many aspects of the department for example within our guidance, policies and procedures so we need to identify and streamline a way to fully achieve this. The language we use is currently being developed and the Participation Officer is coordinating

feedback from the districts regarding what language our children and young people would like us to use.

10. Difficult Conversations

10.1 The Restorative Practice deep dive Hampshire Approach Training is being developed. Current consideration is to offer a session directly focusing on the engagement of children and young people and enabling practitioners to be confident and skilled to work in an open and honest way, having the difficult conversations, particularly when talking about entry to care as part of this training.

The Participation Officer is exploring the idea for opportunities for children in care living out of county to be in touch as a group virtually using Skype or Facebook.

10.2 The Participation Officer would like to develop a Care Ambassador alumnus. Previous Care Ambassadors supporting and role modelling current care ambassadors.

11. Conclusion

11.1 Participation is embedded across the districts. We know our children well and their voice is evident. The “You Said, We Did” is continuing to develop with more work to evidence how feedback has influenced our service delivery.

11.2 District events are progressing, and feedback is positive.

11.3 The recruitment and maintenance of the Care Ambassadors is crucial to progress, whilst many of the time limited one off requests for young people should be open to all, it is about the representative voice of children in care and care leavers that the Care Ambassadors need to be obtaining and then advocating for.

CORPORATE OR 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:	

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

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.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
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None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. 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 under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

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

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

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

N/A

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

N/A

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

N/A

- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

N/A