

21st June 2021

Agenda Item: 11

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND SOCIAL WORK

PROVISION, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS OF THE CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL AND PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LOOKED AFTER 2020/21

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an overview of the work of the Young People Looked After Youth Work team, situated within the Youth Service. The Young People Looked After team is responsible for:
 - the Children in Care Council structure which ensures that young people looked after are represented at all levels in the Nottinghamshire system of Youth Participation
 - encouraging and enabling young people, who are looked after, adopted, or living in residential care, to engage in positive activities provided by the Young People Looked After team and to independently access universal provision
 - working in partnership with Children's Social Care.

Information

2. The Young People Looked After team is responsible for the planning and delivery of a range of positive activities outside of the school day for looked after and adopted young people. This is to enable young people to come together to participate and have fun in events throughout the year as well as to have a voice about their life in care through the work of the Children in Care Council. The Children in Care Council structure includes a number of sub-groups, which provide a mechanism for a range of groups of looked after young people to be involved in Nottinghamshire's system of Youth Participation. Representatives from each sub-group then meet as the formal Children in Care Council board (also known as No Labels). The opportunities on offer for young people to engage are designed to promote and support them to build their confidence and self-esteem as well as to develop new experiences.

3. Young people looked after are signposted to universal services across the County, as well as encouraged to participate in group work activities. This assists young people to develop positive relationships with other young people and youth workers to help broaden their horizons, learn new skills, and access new experiences. Looked after young people have participated in a wide range of activities throughout 2020/21, which are detailed in **paragraph 8**.
4. Activities are designed to help support a holistic assessment of children and young people's needs and to help their personal and social development through participation in activities outside of the school day. The positive activities young people participate in provide a platform for young people to share their views about life in care, which helps to promote placement stability, as young people are actively engaged, and have a trusted Youth Worker to talk to. A number of these young people will go on to be members of the sub-groups of the Children in Care Council and attend No Labels meetings. This is where sub-group representatives come together with a range of senior officers and Elected Members to design and shape services available to them.
5. The Children in Care Council provides the Council with an opportunity to listen to what children and young people are saying, consequently these views are taken forward and acted upon. There is also an expectation that the membership of the Children in Care Council will be encouraged to have an active role in the Young People Board.
6. The development of the Children in Care Council has direct links to Nottinghamshire's Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2018-2021 with regards to the importance placed on active participation and engagement of children and young people, and in seeking their views to improve outcomes and to shape services. This approach is also concurrent with the vision of the Service Director for Youth, Families and Social Work.
7. From April to September during lockdown the Young People Looked After team refocused their work and delivered youth work interventions to help stabilise young people's living arrangements and raise their aspirations, to help avoid further breakdown. This was through supporting the Council's internal residential homes, including Clayfields, and delivering 1:1 youth work intervention to support young people who are most at risk.
8. The Children in Care Council sub-groups and No Labels have met 27 times in 2020/21. Due to the pandemic this has mainly been digital interaction which has involved creative ways of maintaining engagement. The Children in Care Council sub-groups and No Labels members have been actively involved in several events or participated in sharing their views and making decisions on a variety of strategic and business agenda items such as:
 - a steering group of young people leading on the consultation of the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2018-2021. This was to review the ambitions, pledge and action plans, and to gain a wider view from young people across the County to inform the next version of the strategy from 2022 onwards.
 - creating a new pathway plan with the Leaving Care team to ensure the leaving care process remains a robust transition for young people in Nottinghamshire. This will enable young people to lead their own plan, ensuring strength based language is used throughout, and to develop an electronic version to promote greater engagement by young people.

- an ongoing piece of work to further develop the local offer for care leavers by co-producing a practical guide for young people leaving care in preparation for adulthood. Care leavers are provided with opportunities to further develop their skills and knowledge through the 16 plus Children in Care Council sub-group, as well as through individual support by their personal advisors.
- an ongoing piece of work which will be a joint Youth Service/Independent Reviewing Officer Service film featuring care experienced young people, introducing the role and responsibilities of professionals involved in the care of children and young people who are looked after and enabling those new to being looked after to have greater understanding of what they can expect from the professionals they meet.
- participating in the Children's Commissioner care review and meeting with the Children's Commissioner's office during her first week in post to discuss their own experiences of being a looked after young person and the support young people will need post Covid.
- creating a Children in Care Council promotional leaflet to promote the work of the Children in Care Council, the opportunity for children and young people to shape services and positive engagement. This will be distributed amongst the partnership and across the department for professionals to share with children and young people, and to new foster carers at training events
- young people including children in care continue to use the Mind of My Own app as a way of communicating with their social worker. On average 65 statements are received a month. Young people have used Mind of My Own to share both good experiences (such as winning an award at school) or to express concerns; or their views for a meeting
- following consultation with the Children in Care Council, the Leaving Care Service launched the 'Notts Next Steps' App, which is an application that can be downloaded to all smart devices and is a version of Nottinghamshire's Local Offer for Care Leavers. This also promotes events, participation activities, contact details of professionals and organisations and offers for young people, and this is regularly updated. The new 'Achievement Offer' now features on the Notts Next Steps App and is promoting employment, education and training opportunities, training events and vacancies available for young people.

9. Expression of Interest forms were introduced by young people following a review of the process in relation to how young people are invited to participate in shaping the services available to them. The Children in Care Council has received four Expression of Interest forms, allowing young people to:

- take ownership of the agenda and their involvement in the design and delivery of services
- establish the information required and the time needed to enable young people to actively participate
- keep track of individual projects they are involved in.

- **Youth Service/Independent Reviewing Officer Service film** - filming has continued (see **paragraph 8**) throughout the pandemic; the purpose of the film is to introduce children and young people who are new to care to the professionals who will be involved in their lives as a looked after child or young person in Nottinghamshire. The film aims to communicate and re-assure children when they come into care, including to contact and talk to if they have a concern. So far four young people and professionals have been filmed.
- **Quality & Audit team Notts County Council** – this was commissioned by a Senior Practitioner for Quality and Audit. This piece of work involves young people developing a young person's charter/list of expectations for placement moves ensuring transitions are smooth, and which consider the individual needs of young people. This work is due to start in early 2022.
- **Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) looked after & adoption service** – this was commissioned by the Team Manager for the CAMHS Looked After and Adoption team, inviting young people to help design leaflets, a website and video. This material will help explain what the team offers, breakdown any myths about the service, and advise young people on how they can provide feedback to improve the service. This work was paused during the pandemic and will restart later in the year.
- **Emily Moore (Woodland Trust)** - invite for young people to take part in tree planting at the young people's forest to help fight climate change, connect with nature and be part of watching the young people's forest grow. This will also provide opportunities for children and young people to learn more about nature and the outdoors. This opportunity has been on hold throughout the pandemic but is expected to recommence in November 2021 in line with the Woodland Trust's planting schedule.

Other Options Considered

10. No other options have been considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

11. The report seeks approval to further update the Committee on this work in 12 months.

Statutory and Policy Implications

12. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That Committee:

- 1) considers whether there is any further information or actions they require in relation to the information contained in the report.
- 2) agrees to receive a further update report on the work of the Young People Looked After Youth Work team in 12 months and that this be included in the work programme.

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Constitutional Comments (CEH 25/05/21)

13. The recommendations fall within the remit of Children and Young People's Committee under its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (LD 28/05/21)

14. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents:

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Looked After Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2018-2021

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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