

Voice and Participation Service, Children's Select Committee Update September 2023

Team Structure

The Child and Youth Voice Team is being expanded to include new and existing relevant workstreams. The team will be renamed the Voice and Participation Service and will include SEND Voice, Family Voice and also mentoring and volunteering services in addition to the work already being conducted in the Families and Children's Services arena and the Wiltshire Youth Council.

Recognition at CYPN Awards

A remarkable achievement awaits the team as we find ourselves shortlisted for the highly prestigious Children and Young People Now - Social Care Team of the Year Award. The high number of entries from across the nation makes this recognition all the more commendable. The judges' praise for our selection resonates with the immense effort put in to secure our place.

Children in Care and Care Experienced adults

In the recent quarter, our efforts have led to 20 children in care and care-experienced adults engaging with our Children in Care Council activities. Our ongoing emphasis on fostering trust and camaraderie among this cohort has yielded positive results. This approach, anchored in cultivating relationships, has emboldened participants to openly share their experiences, thus influencing positive change.

Noteworthy activities have unfolded, enhancing the lives of our young participants:

- Our annual residential experience at PGL Liddington was offered to 18 children in care, aged 13 to 17, in July.
- August saw the Children in Care Council partake in a water sports day at Oxenwood Outdoor Activity Centre.
- The upcoming October half-term promises an adventure for our members aged 8 to 13 as they embark on a 5-day Cornwall excursion with Go Beyond.
- Our CiCC Committee proudly presents two insightful CiCC Cast Podcast episodes, one delving into Corporate Parenting Priorities and the other exploring life with foster parents.

Meet the Leaders

Our leaders' session produced valuable insights into the direction our young people want to pursue. Discussions encompassed priority issues, meeting attendees' preferences, and session delivery formats. Additionally, the introduction of the SEND Voice Worker role was explored, emphasizing the support required by children with SEND in care.

Kinship and Fostering Conference

We are actively contributing to the upcoming Foster Carers Conference on September 25. By integrating care-experienced adults into the event through keynote speeches, our objective is to uplift and empower foster carers. An interactive workshop named the "rucksack exercise" will offer a unique perspective on values held by families and their interpretation in the context of children in care.

Fostering Training Initiatives

Our collaboration with the Kinship and Fostering training team continues as we work to integrate the lived experiences of care-experienced adults into foster carer training. This approach aims to foster empathy and understanding among carers by sharing insights from those who have personally navigated the care system.

Bright Spots Survey

Collaborating with Coram Voice and the University of Oxford, our involvement in the Bright Spots program signifies our ongoing dedication to enhancing well-being for children in care. A forthcoming survey, "Your Life, Your Care" and "Your Life After Care," will enable us to glean valuable insights into their perceptions, needs, and experiences. The collected information will inform service improvements and better support.

Strengthening Family Engagement

As our new Family Voice Worker prepares to join us on 02 October, exciting plans are in motion. Initial endeavours will focus on enhancing child protection conferences through an online Family Engagement Workshop and insightful surveys. Extended family support will also be explored to prevent child placement in care, bolstered by the Family Voice Worker's involvement in support groups and audit monitoring.

Showcasing Success at Community Care Live

Our participation in Community Care Live on October 11 at 11:30 AM is eagerly anticipated. This workshop will amplify the voices of our youth, parents, and supported adults, showcasing firsthand the positive impact of our work. By sharing their transformative stories, we aim to attract skilled individuals to join our workforce.

Wiltshire Youth Council

Wiltshire's Youth Councillors are nearing the conclusion of their tenure and will be recognised for their accomplishments. As we evaluate the initiative and prepare for the next elections, additional resources are earmarked to build upon our achievements. A planned incorporation of debate elements in the next election process will enrich young people's skillsets.

As the term for the Members of Youth Parliament concludes, their dedication remains unwavering. Recent participation in the Annual Conference to advocate for universal free school meals underscores their commitment to making lasting change.