

**Wiltshire
Children in Care Council
Annual Report
October 2019 – August 2020**

1. Introduction

Wiltshire's Children in Care Council (CiCC) is coordinated by the Children's Commissioning Team within Wiltshire Council. The team's work on youth voice activity supports the Council's ambition that no policy, or service, related to children and young people is developed without first seeking their views. Wiltshire Council believes that participation and involvement is 'the business of every service and organisation that works with children and young people'.

This report provides a summary of CiCC activities over the last twelve months, highlights key messages and outlines priorities for future development.

2. What is CiCC ?

CiCC is a forum for young people, 10 years and above, who live in care, who also extend an open invitation to care leavers. Members volunteer to join the CiCC and to have their voices heard in order to improve the lives of children and young people living in care and leaving care. Membership fluctuates as young people move onto new opportunities and given the time that they have available. CiCC strives to be as open, inclusive and accessible as possible, and at August 2020 had a membership of 19.

CiCC plans to meet at least every other month, and twice a year these meetings are held jointly with members of the Corporate Parenting Panel, and are called Shared Guardianship Sessions.

Shared Guardianship Sessions – CiCC/Corporate Parent Panel 2020	
March	Tuesday 10 March – Cotswold Space, County Hall, Trowbridge, 5pm-6.30pm
September	Tuesday 22 September – Microsoft Teams, Trowbridge, 5pm-7.15pm

3. Messages from CiCC members

Since April 2019, CiCC has been involved and consulted on a range of issues and has made the following input - *You said*. In response, councillors and officers have taken actions – *We did*.

	You said	We did
1	<p>Timing of CPP Meeting</p> <p>Chair of the CiCC raised the issue that young people in care cannot attend the Corporate Parent Panel meetings due to the time of day that they are held.</p>	<p>The Director, Families and Children's Services reported that she had recently spoken with the Chair of CiCC (who has previously attended CPP meetings) who said that she had really enjoyed attending the Corporate Parenting Panel meetings. CiCC members are now invited to all Corporate Parenting Panels and a member is invited to be present at each Children's Select Committee meeting.</p> <p>The move to virtual meetings allows more young people to be in attendance, they will not need to leave school early to travel to the meetings.</p>

<p>2</p>	<p>Mental Health Awareness</p> <p>To continue from our 2019 priority around raising awareness for mental health, the CiCC members wanted to share their experiences of mental health with other young people. CiCC were supported by Wiltshire Council to explore the different ways they could share their message.</p> <p>Each member was invited to write a short paragraph about how they have felt during lockdown and any tips they have for other young people to keep mentally well.</p> <p>Young People also invited Barnardo's to attend a Wiltshire Youth Union meeting so they could share their ideas on improving the 'on your mind' website. This is a website designed to signpost children and young people to local mental health services. Barnardo's have also asked CiCC members to support with renaming the new Wiltshire Early Mental Health and Counselling Support Service.</p>	<p>The Youth Voice lead liaised with the internal Comms Team and discussed how they could share the positive messages that CiCC and other young people in Wiltshire had sent.</p> <p>Wiltshire Council produced an article for Mental Health Awareness week, which featured on the front page of the Council website for the week. www.onyourmind.org.uk also shared the article. This initiative was also promoted in the local media.</p> <p>CiCC supported in the re-design of the on your mind website and have been asked by Barnardo's to support with content on the 'living in care page'. Barnardo's and CiCC are planning to meet again in October.</p> <p>Young people in Wiltshire are being reminded support is out there if they are struggling with emotional wellbeing during COVID-19 https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/news/young-people-encouraged-to-use-early-mental-health-service</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Involved in Recruitment</p> <p>We want to be more involved in the recruitment of Senior Wiltshire Council staff and encourage more young people panels as part of the interview process.</p> <p>It is important to us that our opinions are considered when we are part of interview panels.</p>	<p>In the last year, Wiltshire Council have invited CiCC members to be a part of multiple interview panels.</p> <p>The young people would usually spend the day at County Hall and be assigned their own meeting room where they conducted their interviews.</p> <p>CiCC members have interviewed for the following positions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Head of Service - Virtual Schools ▪ Children in Care Head of Service ▪ Designated Nurse for LAC ▪ Director – Families and Children's Services ▪ Conference and Reviewing Officer <p>Wiltshire Council value the opinion of the CiCC members. At the conclusion of interviews, the young people panel are invited to meet with the main interview panel to discuss the candidates and share their thoughts.</p> <p>In addition to involvement in recruitment, the Families and Children's Commissioning team has also engaged young people in the design and</p>

		<p>evaluation of contracts, making sure the young persons voice is used to inform what we do.</p> <p>This has been in relation to a new Care Leavers Accommodation contract which begins next month, and involved consultation, evaluation of tender applicants and interviews, and also attendance at workshops.</p>
4	<p>Meetings and Engagement</p> <p>We want to be more involved in the planning and running of our meetings.</p> <p>We want to be in more regular contact with other members during lockdown.</p>	<p>The Chair of the Children in Care Council has the leading role in CiCC meetings.</p> <p>The Chair meets with the youth voice lead before CiCC meetings to decide the agenda. At the beginning of each meeting the Chair assigns a Minute taker and timekeeper.</p> <p>At the beginning of lockdown, weekly calls were made to all CiCC members to see how they are coping during lockdown, the calls were also an opportunity to share good news or give the CiCC new ideas.</p>
5	<p>Meeting frequency and style</p> <p>We want meetings to be online during lockdown instead of them being cancelled. We want them to be more than once every two months, so we are in contact with our friends.</p>	<p>Children in Care Council meetings changed from face to face to virtual meetings on Microsoft teams during Covid. The children and young people engagement survey showed that the majority of our young people preferred meetings to be online, and young people also shared some positive aspects about online meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No need to travel ▪ Comfortable at home ▪ Easy to access ▪ Meet more regularly <p>The change to virtual meetings allowed the Children in Care Council to schedule hour-long catch up meetings between their bi-monthly meetings, members were happy with this change and felt the bi-monthly meetings became more productive.</p>
6	<p>Membership</p> <p>We want to get more young people to be members of the CiCC.</p> <p>So far, here are some of the things we have done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We had 5 members facilitate a CiCC stand at the 2019 Post-16 Options event hosted by Wiltshire College. This was an 	<p>The Youth Voice Lead organised the stand and supported the production of CiCC literature for the event, transport, refreshments and games.</p> <p>The Youth Voice Lead attended and co-manned the stand with CiCC members. A 'guess the sweets' competition was put together and young</p>

<p>opportunity to speak with young people and give them information about CiCC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produced our Christmas CiCC newsletter, which will include articles from our CiCC members talking about their experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown and their advice for keeping mentally well. 	<p>people who attended the event were asked to take part.</p> <p>The Youth Voice Lead collated the details of the young people in care who attended the event and expressed an interest in joining CiCC. An email was sent to each with information on CiCC, newsletter and membership form, this resulted in 3 new members joining the CiCC.</p> <p>The Children and Families Commissioning Team has supported the editing and branding of the CiCC newsletter and the finalised newsletter will be mailed out in the first week of December to children and young people aged 8+ with an invitation to join CiCC, and other partner organisations.</p>
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4. Activities during the last 12 months

As well as meeting and considering policy matters, CiCC has engaged in many activities, which have included:

- Discussions and engagement with corporate parents at Shared Guardian meetings and social events
- Enhanced CiCC voice by attending the Wiltshire Youth Union (WYU), which combined the Wiltshire Assembly of Youth (WAY) and Youth Safeguarding Board (YSB) creating a stronger youth voice forum
- Consultation – Youth Consultant Pilot Project
- Induction training for new staff within Children’s Services
- Recruitment panels for senior appointments
- Held a CiCC stand at a Post 16 Options Event for Looked After Children in Trowbridge, resulting in new members
- Held CiCC meetings at external venues, which made travelling easier for some members
- Worked with Barnardo’s to develop the www.onyourmind.org.uk website and its content
- Held a CiCC fun day in November at the Springfield Campus, Corsham.

5. Sample Agenda

Item	Time	Subject
1	16:45	Welcome and introductions – Lorna <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Introduction and ground rules b) Chair to request time keeper for the meeting c) Minute taker (Dexter)
2	16:55	Children in Care Council Easter newsletter
3	17:45	Fun and Refreshments
4	17:55	Corporate Parenting Panel’s Strategic Priorities Finding out from young people how our corporate parents should be progressing this
Close		
Next meeting dates:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuesday 21st April 4.45pm – 7.00pm, County Hall 		

6. Recruitment

Recruitment remains a key priority to ensure secure and meaningful representation. Further support to promote CiCC and to capture a wider cohort of youth voice will be sought through partnership work with the WYU.

This work may include the following pilot activities:

- Joint project work – raising awareness, campaigns, initiatives
- Stronger voice representation at strategic level – i.e. panels, committees, steering groups
- Partnership working with organisations: Wiltshire Council Children's Services, Wiltshire Council Communities Team, Wiltshire Council Public Health, Healthwatch Wiltshire (delivered by Evolving Communities), Wiltshire Police, Wiltshire Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership, Virgin Care (delivering child health services), Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust (delivering child and adolescent mental health services), Wiltshire Children and Families Voluntary Sector Forum, Wiltshire Parent Carer Council, Wiltshire Community First, Barnardo's (Wiltshire Early Mental Health and Counselling Service).

7. Priorities for future development

CiCC has identified priorities that it wishes to work on in 2019/20, some of which are continued from 2018/19, and are in order of priority:

1. Continuing to raise awareness of mental health and emotional wellbeing
2. Raising awareness of bullying
3. Continuing to make newsletters and promote our group
4. Training new staff – children's services induction, Wiltshire college and any other opportunities
5. Being professional when we have meetings and develop skills to be effective representatives
6. Meeting CiCCs from other counties (it will be more fun if there are some activities)
7. Taking part in consultations
8. Influencing decision makers by sharing experiences and that of others

8. Meeting dates

In January 2020, the following schedule for the year was proposed. WYU meeting dates have also been included as CiCC members are active in the WYU and represent looked after children within this youth voice forum. From April 2020, CiCC meetings were moved to virtual meetings due to Covid. CiCC members suggested they would like to keep in regular contact with other members, as a result, catch up meetings were scheduled between CiCC meetings.

Month	Children in Care Council	Wiltshire Youth Union (WYU)
January	Tuesday 21, County Hall, Trowbridge 4.45pm – 7.00pm	Dispatch out to WYU with Meeting Dates
February	Dispatch out to CiCC	Thursday 6 th , County Hall, Trowbridge 4.45pm – 7.00pm
Member of Youth Parliament Elections – 3 rd – 14 th February		
March	Tuesday 10 th , Shared Guardian Sessions (with Corporate Parents), County Hall, Trowbridge, 5.00pm-7.00pm	Thursday 12 th , Youth Union/UKYP induction, County Hall, Trowbridge, 4.45pm-7.15pm
April	Tuesday 21 st , County Hall, Trowbridge, 4.45pm-7.00pm	Dispatch out to WYU
May	Thursday 21 st , World Day for Cultural Diversity, Joint Meeting – County Hall, Trowbridge, 4.45pm – 7.00pm	
June	Tuesday 30 th , County Hall, Trowbridge, 4.45pm – 7.00pm	Dispatch out to WYU
July	Thursday 7 th , World Chocolate Day, Joint Meeting, County Hall, Trowbridge, 4.45 – 7.00pm	
August	Summer Holidays - No Meetings	
September	Tuesday 22 nd , Shared Guardian session (With Corporate Parents), County Hall, Trowbridge, 5.00pm – 7.00pm	Thursday 24 th , County Hall, Trowbridge, 4.45pm – 7.00pm
October	Saturday 10 th CiCC – Fun Day, Details to be confirmed	Dispatch out to WYU
November	Tuesday 17 th , Joint Meeting – Anti-bullying week (14-18th), County Hall, Trowbridge, 4.45pm – 7.00pm	
December	Tuesday 8 th , CiCC Christmas Event Details to be confirmed	Thurs 8 th , WYU Christmas Event Details to be confirmed

9. Moving on – Care Leavers Forum

In October 2018, Wiltshire Council launched its Care Leavers' Promise. The Council consulted with local care experienced young people about the types of support that would be useful when moving out of care. In support of the Promise, a meeting was sought with a group of these young people to discuss the option of co-creating a Care Leavers Forum.

Wiltshire Council wants to strengthen care leavers voice, and work in partnership to co-develop elements of the Promise, and has also commissioned a Care Leavers App to promote better communication between professional and young people. This new format is being piloted this year, and lead by Operational teams, looking to host more localised meetings, and will be kept under review.

Care leavers fed back that they wanted:

- to have a regular forum
- to be held quarterly
- refreshments to be provided
- meetings to be co-chaired – care leaver & PA
- venues to be booked around the county- so as many young people as possible could attend
- a time of day that suits them

10. COVID-19

During COVID-19 children and young people have needed to manage quite a unique situation, with many restrictions placed upon them, and they have not been able to continue their lives as normal. We want to learn how our young people have felt during this time, so we can agree ways to support them as we emerge from these restrictions and move to a new normal.

As part of this work, the Families and Children's Commissioning team surveyed the young people who form the Wiltshire Youth Union (including Children in Care Council (CiCC), Members of the Youth Parliament (MYP's), and the Care Leavers Forum). It is apparent from the responses we have received that many young people have been coping well during Covid-19, although a number of challenges have also been identified. There are three main areas where the responses from young people were less positive and include 'I've had energy to spare', 'I've been dealing with problems well' and 'I've been feeling loved'.

There are further discussions planned with the young people to better understand what the Council can do to make them feel more supported, and able to overcome the challenges they face.

11. Summary

The Children In Care Council has had to make changes to the way meetings have been delivered, and is supportive of virtual meetings in the future. The closure of schools also made communication with young people challenging so we put in place weekly calls with CiCC members to catch up, which was really appreciated, and helped to maintain contact. We will continue to work closely with our Looked After Children to listen to their views and respond accordingly to ensure the council considers the voice of young people in everything that it does.

We would like to thank all of our CiCC members for their time, engagement, and hard work during this challenging period. Their participation is invaluable, and helps to ensure that we all remain focussed on meeting the needs of children and young people, by listening to their views.

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September 2020