

Wiltshire Council

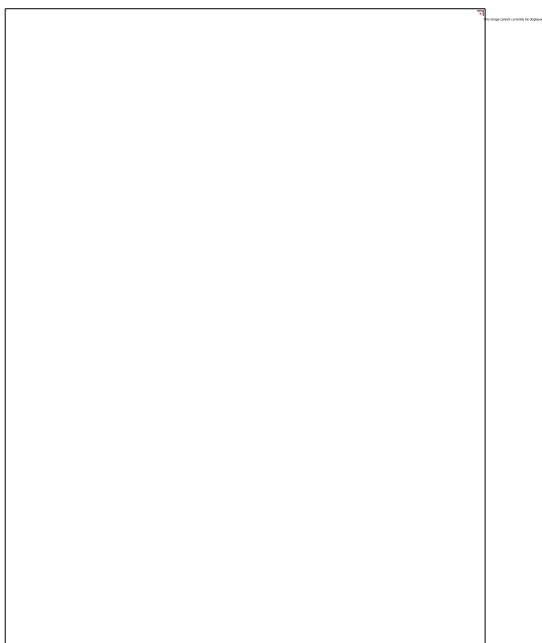


**Wiltshire
Children in Care Council
Annual Report
October 2020 – August 2021**

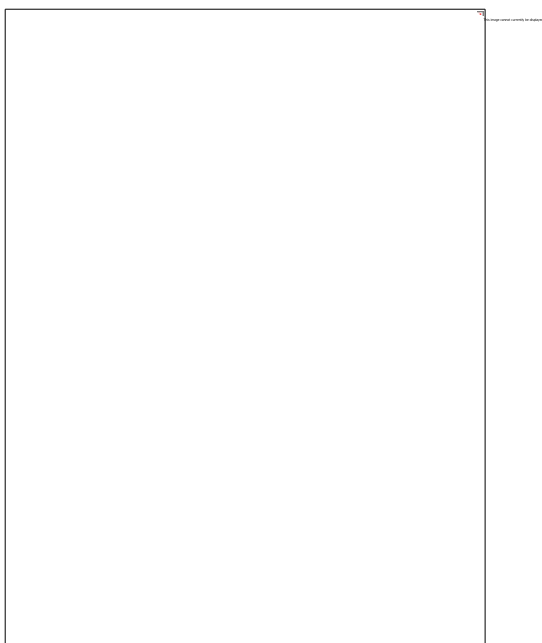
1. Introduction

In 2019-2020 Wiltshire's Children in Care Council (CiCC) was coordinated by the Children's Commissioning Team within Wiltshire Council. In November 2020 a decision was made to move this to a newly formed 'Child and Youth Voice Team' sitting within the Conference and Reviewing Service. 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.



Youth Voice event at Salisbury Arts Centre



Cam our Support Worker doing research at a youth voice participation event

2. What is CiCC and what have we done this year?

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. Over the past year we have had contact with over 30 young people. Our membership currently sits at around 9 young people who are committed to CiCC and regularly attend meetings. We feel it is important to have a flexible approach to membership and allow young people to take part in activities and consultations in a flexible way with no pressure.

CiCC MEETING Meet your Councillors

- ▶ On 18th March the CiCC meeting will be an opportunity for all Wiltshire children in care to meet some of the Wiltshire Councillors.
- ▶ This will be an opportunity to tell them what you think is going well and what could be done better.
- ▶ When: 18th March
- ▶ At: 4:30pm
- ▶ On: **TEAMS** online meeting
- ▶ To find out more or book your place email: Cameron.Strawson@Wiltshire.gov.uk or ask your social worker

Flyer for a meet the Councillors session

CiCC used to meet at least every other month, and twice a year these meetings were held jointly with members of the Corporate Parenting Panel and were called Shared Guardian Sessions. In January 2021 we made the decision to change the format of the meetings to meet more regularly via Microsoft TEAMS. We now meet twice per month (on the first and third Thursday of the month). The meeting on the first Thursday of the month is a fun activity and the meeting on the third Thursday of the month is offered up for consultancy so people can book into the meeting to consult with CiCC members. Since the lifting of the Covid restrictions we have started meeting in person to do fun activities and promote relationships between CiCC members.



Reindeer from our CiCC trip to Longleat. 'Selfie with a reindeer' was very popular 😊

We have met up to do a trip to Longleat for CiCC members, a chat and shakeaway picnic and a pizza night. We invite the 'corporate parent' Councillors to CiCC meetings twice a year. We are also facilitating half termly 'Meet the Leader' sessions between CiCC members and Council Leaders. We have had fortnightly CiCC planning sessions to plan CiCC activity with the CiCC leadership Team. We made links with a successful CiCC in Oxfordshire in December 2020 and were given some good ideas to improve our CiCC. This has included setting up a CiCC Ambassador scheme which we will talk about further on in this report. We have also launched a CiCC Consultancy and Champion scheme which have been very popular.



'Staff team selfie' at Longleat trip enjoying snacks on the boat trip.

CiCC now have a members WhatsApp group which means we can stay in touch, share news, and give each other support. We feel this is working very well. We also have a Facebook group and sometimes meet up and play online Games via apps to stay in touch.

CiCC Leadership Team

Alex McDermid – CiCC Chair

Joe Sutton – Child and Youth Voice Lead Worker

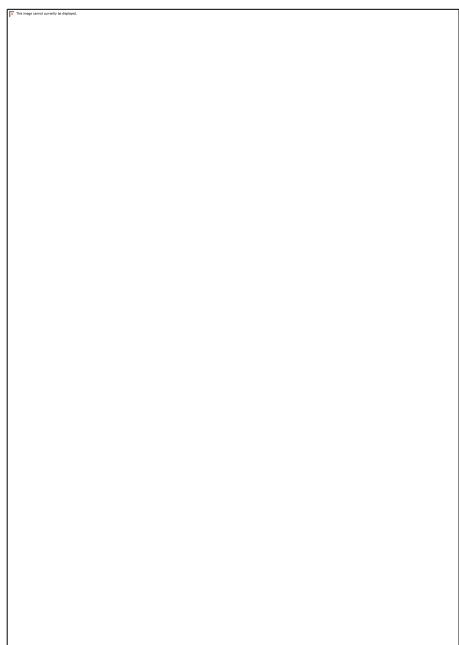
Cameron Strawson – Child and Youth Voice Support Worker

Elly Mills – Child and Youth Voice Operational Lead (Secondment)

CiCC Ambassador Scheme

Ambassadors can be CiCC members, Council staff and Councillors who have a specialist interest in an important issue to CiCC such as mental health, housing, jobs, activities and tackling racism. These reflect our priorities and the priorities of CPP. We currently have 18 Ambassador Council Staff members. All of the Ambassadors get together at least twice a year to share information with each other. If anyone needs information about the important issues, they can get advice from the Ambassador for that issue.

We have been particularly pleased that Pier Pritchard (Safeguarding Service Manager) agreed to be our 'Recruiting Good Social Workers' Ambassador.



Pier Pritchard our Ambassador for 'Recruiting Good Social Workers'

This means we have formed a good link with the operational teams. It has meant we have been an active part of the recruitment of Social Workers (sitting on panels and contributing towards the design of interview questions). We have been able to pass back to Pier what we think the important qualities of a Social Worker are so she can pass this on and promote these qualities in the staff.



Sharnia Matthews - our Ambassador for Diversity and tackling racism.

We also have Council staff Ambassadors for:

- Sports and Senior Management Links
- Missing Children and Young People
- Pets
- Tackling Climate Change
- New Arrivals (UASC)
- Family Time / Staying in Touch
- Clubs and Activities
- Diversity and Tackling Racism
- Residential Care Homes
- Mental Health
- Recognizing Achievements
- People affected by disability
- Keeping and feeling safe
- Housing
- Recruiting good social workers
- LGBT+
- Career Opportunities
- New Arrivals and advice about skin and haircare.

WILTSHIRE CiCC NEEDS YOU

Could you be a CiCC Ambassador?

We need passionate staff representatives to be CiCC Ambassadors

What we need

- ▶ We need council employees to be Children in Care Council Ambassadors. This is a networking role for staff an interest in one of the specific issues that have been highlighted as important by our children in care.
- ▶ As an Ambassador we would like you to attend at least 2 CiCC meetings a year and work with CiCC to rise the profile of these important issues within your team and the council.
- ▶ You do not need to be a social worker any interested staff will be welcomed.
- ▶ If you want to find out more please email Ely.Mills@Wiltshire.gov.uk

Ambassadors needed

- ▶ Climate Change
- ▶ Mental Health
- ▶ Activities and Clubs
- ▶ Staying Connected (Family Time) APPOINTED
- ▶ Pets
- ▶ New arrivals in the UK APPOINTED
- ▶ Residential Care Homes
- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Disability

Flyer sent out to Council staff to recruit staff CiCC Ambassadors. All of these positions are now filled. We were all overwhelmed by the brilliant take up and buy in by Council staff.

We also invited people within the community from organisations that are important to us to be Ambassadors. These are called Community Ambassadors. We have Community Ambassadors for:

- SPORTS
- Emotional Wellbeing
- People who have an important Faith
- SCOUTS
- Drug and Alcohol problems – MOTIV8
- Tackling climate change
- PETS and mental health
- Athletics



Rev Steve Hawkes our **CiCC** community Ambassador for People who have an important faith



Verity Ockenden our **CiCC** Community Ambassador for athletics

We are in the process of recruiting Councillors to be Ambassadors. Councillor Stewart Palmen is our Councillor Ambassador for mental health. He has sat in on a number of important meetings and consultations about mental health. This has enabled **CiCC** members to feel supported.



Cllr Stewart Palmen our **CiCC** Ambassador for mental health.

Following the Councillor elections in May 2021 we were delighted that newly elected Cllr Sam Pearce-Kearney put himself forward to be involved with **CiCC** and CPP. Sam has agreed to be our **CiCC** Ambassador for Child and Youth Voice.



Cllr Sam Pearce-Kearney our new CiCC Ambassador for Child and Youth Voice

We are still recruiting young people to be CiCC Ambassadors. We have young people Ambassadors for:

- Pets and new arrivals
- Recruiting good social workers
- Recognising achievements and sports
- Emotional wellbeing and drugs / alcohol
- Racial equality and Diversity

CiCC Consultancy Scheme

We have launched our CiCC consultancy scheme. This means young people in care can be consultants and help the Council with important business and offer consultancy. Consultants are offered a high level of support, training, and reimbursement by way of vouchers for their time and expertise.

CiCC Champion Scheme

We have invited Council staff to be Child and Youth Voice Champions. The Champions meet on the third Thursday of the month via Microsoft Teams. We feel this has been an excellent way of promoting CiCC and sharing important information so it can be passed on to all of the teams. The Champion role has been very popular. They have also been pivotal in sharing information about the Mind of My Own App and important consultations and CiCC activity

opportunities. Alex the CiCC Chair has attended all of the Champions meetings to represent CiCC.

3. Our Priorities for 2020-2021

The priorities identified in last report (August 2020) were (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.

What we have achieved with our priorities?

1. Continuing to raise awareness of mental health and emotional wellbeing

Raising awareness about mental health and emotional wellbeing has continued to be an important priority for CiCC. We now have Ambassadors for mental health and emotional wellbeing (Councillor, staff, community, and young people). We have had a half term of child and youth voice consultancy on mental health. This involved Elly, Cam and Joe going out to consult with young people in youth groups, a big survey for all young people and a mental health survey facilitated by Bristol University for children and young people in care. We then fed the outcome of the consultations to our leaders (Councillors, Directors and Chief Executive) at a ‘meet the leader’s session’ in July. We held a health and wellbeing online festival in July. We have found that meeting other young people in care and doing fun activities has helped our member’s emotional wellbeing. It is also helpful to be able to talk to other members about mental health, find out about resources and advocacy and feel less alone. This has been particularly important in lockdown.

South West CiCC (children in care council)
Online Health and Wellbeing Festival

This is for all young people in care,
 their workers and their carers 😊

To book your place please email
childandyouthvoice@Wiltshire.gov.uk

Monday 26th July at 10am
TIMETABLE FOR THE FESTIVAL
 (MIGHT BE CHANGED)

10am – welcome everyone
 10:15 -10:45 – Alan Levi (Emotional health workshop and exercises)
 10:45-11 – Break
 11.00-11.30 – Chris Eden cookery demo (Michelin star chef demonstrating how to make a healthy snack).
 11.30-11:45 – Break
 12:00- 12:30 – Verity Ockenden (professional runner, GB athlete and poet running talk, inspirational poems and questions and answers about running and athletics).




2. Raising awareness of bullying

At CiCC we promote anti-bullying and we strive to be an inclusive group. This does not mean that members get on all of the time and sometimes members can annoy each other. We make sure that everyone in CiCC feels safe at our meetings and activities. Our leaders are always about when we meet up and are part of our WhatsApp group so they can offer support if bullying does become an issue for anyone. We are planning to have a big consultation on bullying in 2022.

3. Continuing to make newsletters and promote our group

Covid19 has caused some problems for promoting CiCC. It has made it hard to post out newsletters and also meet up face to face. Our CiCC members were keen to have a WhatsApp group as this enables young people to share information immediately and share details of events and meetings. Cameron and Joe oversee the WhatsApp group. We also have a secure Facebook group. We have not sent out any newsletters and this is something we need to have as a priority for next year. It has been agreed that we can have a regular slot in the Fostering Magazine which is sent out twice a year by the Fostering Team. We have promoted our group by advertising our activities through Social Workers and also working closely with the Independent Reviewing Officers. We have also set up a residential weekend for September

2021. We were really pleased with how popular this was and nineteen young people will be attending, we also have a long waiting list for it. We plan to do a CiCC residential twice per year as a way of promoting CiCC.

4. Training new staff – children’s services induction, Wiltshire college and any other opportunities

Joe and Cam have been involved in staff training since they have been in post and have been going to team meetings to promote child and youth voice work. Cam has been involved with designing and delivering some language training. Auditing work has demonstrated that the recommendations made by Cam in his training have led to a cultural shift with Social Workers writing in a much more child and young person friendly way.

Next year we would want to become more consistently involved in training and inductions for all Council staff.

5. Being professional when we have meetings and develop skills to be effective representatives

Our CiCC members have been able to join in with lots of meetings because of the move over to Microsoft Teams. We have learnt lots of skills because of doing this. We have also launched our Child and Youth Voice academy so we can consistently have training and support to develop our skills and confidence. Joe has been on some ‘AQA’ training which means he can provide AQA certificates which CiCC members can be awarded and put on their CVs.



6. Meeting CiCCs from other counties (it will be more fun if there are some activities)

Our leaders have met regularly with participation officers from other Local Authorities which means we get to hear about what other CiCCs are up to. We have formed good links with



Oxfordshire and Swindon CiCCs. We invited Swindon and Oxfordshire CiCC to our health and Wellbeing Festival. We are looking forward to meeting up with other CiCCs at national and local events now that the COVID19 restrictions have been lifted.



7. Taking part in consultations

We have been involved with lots of consultations over the past year. We have completed a Young Person’s inspection of Aspire House. We made several recommendations which the staff at Aspire House have implemented.

CiCC offer one of their meetings per month for workers to book in and have ‘consultancy’.

CiCC have been supported to provide a range of consultations which have included:

- What makes a good foster carer?
- What makes a good IRO?
- What makes a good social worker?
- How we find our health assessments?
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- Community engagement.
- Tackling climate change.

FOSTERING
with
Wiltshire Council

CICC MEETING **Getting it right**

What makes a good foster carer?

- ▶ **Thursday 4th March** at **16:30** online on TEAMS
- ▶ To get the joining details or to find out more please email your new **Child and Youth Voice** worker **Cameron Strawson** on Cameron.Strawson@Wilts.hire.gov.uk or ask your social worker.
- ▶ For our CICC meeting on 4th March we will be helping fostering workers understand what makes a good foster carer.
- ▶ Clare Godspeed from fostering is joining us. Clare needs CICC to help her understand what makes a good foster carer.
- ▶ Clare also wants to talk about how CICC members can get involved in getting more people to foster for Wiltshire Council. This means we can make sure we get the right foster carers.
- ▶ This session is for all children in care even if they are living in a care home or with a family member. It is very important for the fostering workers to know what you think so they can get it right.

Flyer for 'what makes a good foster carer' consultation. This was our most popular CiCC meeting to date.

Our **CICC** members and Chair have been involved with interviewing for a number of important Council jobs.

We have also:

- supported a small group of youth consultants to meet with the service manager of MASH (multi agency safeguarding hub) to make the telephony more child friendly so it is now much easier for children and young people to report concerns to MASH.
- supported some youth consultants (approximately 4) to give their lived experiences of lockdown to CYPMH (young people's mental health network).
- been part of a working group who are designing a new care leavers app for all children in care to access important information.
- provided a booklet for carers and staff on ensuring skin and hair needs are met for all of our children and young people.

8. Influencing decision makers by sharing experiences and that of others

We have been able to achieve this through our consultations and through our meet the leader sessions. Cameron is sitting on fostering panel which means he can represent

CiCC) and be a voice for children in care and CiCC). Next year we hope to be more actively involved in some of the Council's decision-making forums.



A flyer for one of Cam's language sessions. Wiltshire's principal social worker (PSW) is confident there has been a cultural shift amongst Social Workers who now write to the child or young person in their reports.

9. Other Achievements

We have established positive links with our community engagement officers. One of our CPP priorities is about ensuring all CiC have the opportunity to feel connected to their local community. We were able to invite Rhys Schell (the manager of the Community Engagement Officers) to be part of the CPP team and Ollie Phipps one of his team is now our CiCC Ambassador for community links.

We have supported one of our consultants to create a new podcast called 'Fostering Positivity'. The podcast lasts around 30 minutes and is released every 2 weeks. The show includes themes such as the consultant's life and her experiences of growing up in care and other guests talking about issues such as mental health support, care leavers at university, careers, and other important topics. The team helps the consultant by offering advice and guidance around topics and the Council will also share the podcast on its social media platforms.



Our CiCC chair is going to be doing some work experience / consultancy work with 'Early Years' to assist the staff in gaining understanding of the needs of CiC.

CiCC now has its own named police officer who can attend meetings and be a source of information for CiC.

4. Our priorities for next year (2021-2022)

- Building on our links with our communities to fulfil our priority of ensuring CiC have the opportunity to feel connected to their community.
- Continue our focus on mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- Having a focussed consultation on bullying
- CiCC members to receive AQA certificates for achievements
- Recruiting Councillor Ambassadors
- Recruiting a permanent Operational Lead for Child and Youth Voice (ideally someone who is care experienced)
- Recruiting some Deputy Chairs who can support the current CiCC Chair
- Recruiting a care experienced apprentice who can work in the CYV Team.
- Following up our meet the leader session and our recommendations for Aspire House to see if we have had impact 6 months later on.

5. Summary

We feel we have achieved a lot this year given that we have still been limited because of COVID.

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.

Report authors

Alex McDermid – CiCC Chair

Joe Sutton – Child and Youth Voice Lead Worker

Cameron Strawson – Child and Youth Voice Support Worker

Elly Mills – Child and Youth Voice Operational Lead (Secondment)