



**Wiltshire Council**

**Children's Select Committee**

**March 2022**

---

## **Child and Youth Voice**

### **Regular update to the Children's Select Committee**

#### **Wiltshire Youth Union**

The Child and Youth Voice Team is committed to supporting young people across Wiltshire have their say about issues that are important to them. The Wiltshire Youth Union is an umbrella term that we use to explain the work the team does with the wider youth population outside of children social care and has various initiatives that are worked upon. Work undertaken in this space has included a consultation around mental health, young carers and most recently supporting young people who are LGBTQ+.

#### **1. Mental Health Consultation**

1.1) The mental health consultation carried out has been shared with colleagues from CAMHS, the CCG, the Health and Wellbeing Board and has also with staff members from Public Health to highlight how important this issue is but also determine that this is a key priority for young people. Young people's mental health is one of the areas that the Wiltshire Youth Council will be exploring further and how this can be addressed within schools.

#### **2. Young Carers Consultation**

2.1) A steering group has been created to tackle key issues which young carers have raised. For instance, young carers told us that often their schools are unaware of their caring responsibilities and the effect these have on the grades and attendance. The steering group is working on implementing young carers passports that highlight the young carers roles and support that they may need.

#### **3. LGBTQ+ Consultation**

3.1) The CYV Team has been focusing on its consultation with LGBTQ+ young people in Wiltshire. On 16th February a group of LGBTQ+ young people were

supported to share their views on what additional support they would like to see in place in their communities, and within their schools. As a result of this consultation a number of priorities has been taken away and will be presented at the Meet the Leaders Session scheduled for the 22 March 2022.

3.2) Future consultations will be decided and carried out by consulting with the Wiltshire Youth Council.

#### **4. Wiltshire Youth Council**

4.1) 24 out of 28 mainstream secondary schools have now successfully held elections and their Wiltshire Youth Councillor and Deputy Youth Councillor have been chosen. We also have one independent school taking part.

4.2) 3 young people have been appointed for the community seats. These seats will allow children that live in Wiltshire but do not go to school in Wiltshire to have the opportunity to influence decisions made in Wiltshire.

4.3) On Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March we held a celebration event and conference for our newly elected Wiltshire Youth Councillors. The cabinet welcomed them and then spent time explaining their roles and responsibilities and how they might work together with the Shadow Youth Cabinet. The young people were awarded their certificates and after lunch held internal elections to fill the Member of Youth Parliament and the Shadow Youth Cabinet Positions. We were highly impressed with the level of communication, skills, and passion shown by all of the participants.

4.4) We are in the process of recruiting young people as Special Advisors to support the work of the Wiltshire Youth Councillors on critical issues that young people face. These Special Advisors will be experts by experience and have lived experience of being part of an underrepresented group in the community. We will be recruiting Special Advisors from the LGBTQ community, young carers, children in care, military families and more.

4.5) We are hoping that in the future the Youth Council will report back to the Children Select Committee with a report of their activities. We are confident that with the right support the Wiltshire Youth Council will be a successful means for young people to make positive change in the county.

### **Children Social Care**

#### **5. Children in Care Council (CICC)**

5.1) We have finalised the 2022/2023 activity programme for our Children in Care Council (CICC). The programme has been sent out alongside a calendar which the young people can use to sign up to the monthly fun activities running from March 2022. There is a large array of activities being offered, including, climbing, horse riding, a football tournament, street dance and a roller disco.

5.2) As part of our new CICC activity programme, we will be using these sessions as an opportunity for young people to express their views in a fun and safe space. Our Corporate Parents will be invited to attend these sessions, and Councillors can meet

young people and hear their views on what really matters to them. The CPP members will then feedback what they have been told back to the rest of the panel.

5.3) The CICC have been supporting the up-and-coming Star Awards by rehearsing for their performance which they will give on April 8, 2022; the newly confirmed date for the Star Awards. The young people have also been performing their music in the build-up to the event at events around the county.

## **6. Mind of My Own App**

6.1) Mind of My Own is an award-winning app designed with young people for children and young people. It helps children and young people communicate their views in a way that suits them. They can create their own accounts, which can be used on any device at any time and is fully accessible in over 100 languages! Having a voice is empowering for young people and the Mind of My Own app helps them to share what's important and can help workers understand what is going on in their lives. It's also an exceptionally good way for workers to better evidence young people's views and show them that they are being listened to.

6.2) Wiltshire Council has retained its position as the top user of the Mind of My Own app in England. Although this is a great achievement, we can go further to ensure that the app is fully utilised. We will soon be contacting members of staff that have signed up to have workers' accounts but have not used their worker's accounts and offering them support to make the most out of this fantastic too.

6.3) Teams are starting to embed Mind of My Own into their practices and it is being used now more for business reasons e.g. preparing young people for meetings, creating pen pictures to support with placement planning and receiving feedback/complaints. We have set out new terms of reference for the Mind of My Own Champions, whose role it is to support the wider directorate. We are continuing to run our Mind of My Own Monday training sessions, alongside some bi-monthly Wednesday session, and currently have 293 staff members trained in how to use the app.

## **7. Youth Consultants**

7.1) We have a fantastic group of 12 Youth Consultants who are care leavers or have experience of being on a child protection plan. They are eager to be more involved and take part in various activities. They continue to play a crucial role in scrutinising different areas of Children's Services and have recently made comments on how we as a local authority are meeting our pledges on the Children in Care promise. This will be fed back to the Corporate Parenting Panel.

7.2) The Child and Youth Voice Team have now been meeting with the Youth Consultants monthly as of January 2022. During these sessions our consultants have helped to develop our new Young Persons Fostering Consultation Panel. The goal of this new initiative is to involve care experienced young people in the assessment process of applicant foster carers, see more detail below.

## **8. Working with the Kinship and Fostering Team**

8.1) We are continuing to work with the Kinship and Fostering Team to develop our Young Persons Fostering Consultation Panel. The Youth Consultants have received training to help them in their roles with the panel. The first Young Persons Panel was also delivered on Tuesday 15th February. The session was chaired by Cameron Strawson, our care-experienced child and youth voice support worker, and the panel was made up of 6 young people, 5 who are care-experienced, and 1 who has extensive experience with social services. The Panel generated useful discussions between the young people and perspective foster carers. Following the session, the chair wrote up a report to provide feedback on how the applicants did, this will be shared with the Fostering Panel and key decision makers.

8.2) We are continuing to work with the Principal Social Worker to promote our new ways of writing by professionals when they complete their case notes. We are now taking this a step further by offering training to Foster Carers on how to write their diary notes in a way that is younger person friendly.

## **9. Additional Staff**

9.1) We have recruited two new care experienced apprentices into our team as support assistants. They will bring valuable experience and support the work of the team.

## **10. Future Activities**

In this next quarter the Child and Youth Voice Team will.

- Work with the Wiltshire Youth Councillors to set an agenda for the year, with a new focussed theme each month. We will then ensure that the relevant officers and members are available to work with the Wiltshire Youth Council to support them in achieving their goals
  - Set parameters with officers and members of how they can work with the Wiltshire Youth Council
  - Supply training to the Wiltshire Youth Councillors to help them in their roles
  - Facilitate our first monthly CICC activities and support the young people to perform at the star awards
  - Support our two new apprentices with their inductions.
  - Hold another fostering panel
  - Support the youth consultants to adapt the Young Persons Fostering Consultation Panel, so this can be used for recruiting ASYE Social Workers
- 

March 2022

**Authors:** Joe Sutton Child and Youth Voice Team Manager and Cameron Strawson Child and Youth Team Support Worker.