

Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

3 March 2021

Child and Youth Voice Update

Impact (both positive and negative) of this current lockdown

1. No further update since the report provided to the committee by Gary Binstead in January 2021. The new Child and Youth Voice Team will become fully operational in March and consultation activity with children and young people can start to take place over the spring to provide a fuller evaluation of the impact of the lockdown on children's lives in Wiltshire.

Impact of the implementation' of the new Child and Youth Voice Team

2. The new Child and Youth Voice Team sits within the Conference and Reviewing Service and Quality Outcomes for Children and Families. Elly Mills has been appointed as Operational Lead for Child and Youth Voice (and IRO's) on a secondment basis to oversee the work of the team made up of a Child and Youth Voice Lead and Support Worker; Joe Sutton and Cameron Strawson have been appointed to these posts, Cameron started in his role on 2 February and Joe starts on 3 March.
3. A detailed plan has been approved at the Performance and Outcomes Board in February and aims to achieve the following objectives:
 - a) Engagement and participation of young people is maximised in the youth groups and forums such as the Youth Union, Children in Care (CIC) Council and Care Leaver's Forum.
 - b) Young people are empowered and enabled to have a strong voice and are supported to research other young peoples lived experiences, perceptions and insights across Wiltshire to shape service development of the Council and its partners.
 - c) Young people are involved in scrutinising and inspecting services across Wiltshire and are part of the Quality Assurance Framework.
 - d) Young People are supported to work directly with leaders and decision-makers to influence change from senior levels and cascade through the organisation.

- e) Wiltshire Council delivers on its commitment to listening to young people and making sure they are at the centre of services for children and young people.

4. Some key actions to achieve these objectives will be:

- a) To improve engagement from children, young people and adults in child and youth voice work we are creating the following roles –
 - **Champions:** People who work for the council to help us with child and youth voice. They will feedback to their teams what we are doing and how workers can get involved.
 - **Consultants:** Children and young people who have services from social care and are supported to give the council advice based on their experience.
 - **Ambassadors:** CICC members, council staff, partner agencies and councillors who have a specialist interest in an issue such as mental health, housing, jobs, activities, equal opportunities and tackling discrimination. These will reflect the corporate parenting panel priorities and will aim to raise the profile of CICC across the council and strengthen links with the community.
- b) Plan future consultation events and forums; reaching out to children across Wiltshire and from a diverse range of backgrounds to influence positive change withing the organisation and decisions made about services delivered to them.
- c) Arrange and organise regular recognition events that celebrate young people. First event for 2021 (when lockdown restrictions are lifted) - A Wiltshire Council Junior Bake Off for children in care.
- d) Create and maintain a child and youth voice webpage and online platform.
- e) Provide AQA accredited training to young people in research skills to lead research projects across Wiltshire. Agree a topic to be researched in 2021 with the Youth Union/CICC/Corporate Parenting Panel.
- f) A plan is put in place for young people to inspect priority services for children and young people. The aim is for 6-10 young people (a minimum of 50% from those that use the service) are recruited.
- g) Involve children and young people in internal peer reviews that take place in children's services.
- h) Review the format of the Youth Union, CICC and Care Leaver's Forum so that these groups are fun and rewarding for children and young people to be part of.

- i) Support the UK Youth Parliament by holding annual elections to the three constituency areas and raising Wiltshire's issues nationally.
- j) Feed into the national youth voice conversation by supporting young people to participate in UK wide consultations put on by organisations such as the Office of the Children's Commissioner, National Youth Agency, Children and Young People Now etc.
- k) Facilitate regular meetings between young people with the Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Children's Services, CEO, Director for Children's Services, Director for Families and Children, Director for Skills and Education and Director for Commissioning.
- l) Work closely with the community area boards and local youth networks to contribute to funding decisions for youth activities, bring this knowledge and understanding back to the Performance and Outcomes Board.
- m) Establish a formal method of communication via democratic services colleagues so that young people influence funding decisions for youth activities and events.
- n) Promote advocacy for children and young people and the use of the Mind of My Own App.
- o) Promote and facilitate requests for young people to be involved interviews, recruitment and training of children's services staff.
- p) Regularly measure the success of initiatives and impact of interventions reflecting upon performance and implement improvements.

An evaluation of the impact of the youth consultant role

5. Community First recruited and trained 8 youth consultants including a project support worker. They completed several consultations and listening projects with young carers, youth clubs, young victims of crime and young people accessing SEND support in schools, children in care and children subject to child protection plans. They listened to and shared the views of over 200 children and young people, as well as representing the views of their peers in local youth forums.
6. **Children in Care** were asked about how they found their statutory care reviews so the IRO's could think about how these meetings are held to improve the quality of children's participation. These consultations confirmed that children and young people prefer reports being written **to** them rather than **about** them and underlined the importance of using child-friendly language. As a result of these consultations we are changing the child's review consultation form and children in care will have the option to have a letter from their IRO summarising their review as well as the full report.

7. **Children subject to a CP Plan.** Children were consulted as part of the family-led review of child protection conferences. This consultation underlined the importance of children being prepared for a child protection conference and having access to independent advocacy. Recommendations from this review include working with the social work teams and advocacy service to ensure children are more consistently prepared for these types of meetings and are referred for opt out independent advocacy.

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