

## Kirklees Looked After Children Independent Service (Children's Rights Team)

### Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum update report (April 2018 to November 2018)

#### APPENDIX 1

Reporting Period	April 2018 to November 2018
Report of	Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum Update
Report to	Corporate Parenting Board
Report Originator	Melanie Tiernan
Date of Report	1 <sup>st</sup> November 2018

#### 1. Overview of Service

The Children in Care Council meets bi-weekly on a Monday evening and is a meeting for children and young people aged 12 to 15 who are in the care of the Local Authority. The aim of the group is to discuss the issues for children and young people who are in care and to work with professionals to try and improve services, to ensure that they meet the needs of those who are in receipt of them.

The Care Leavers Forum is for young people aged 16 to 21 (or 25 if still in full time education) and the remit is to discuss the issues that young people face as they prepare to leave care and move into independence. Again, young people work with professionals to try to improve services and ensure that they meet need. This group meets bi-weekly on a Wednesday evening.

Over the last 12 months changes in services have led to a time of challenge and change for the council and forum. However, in October a permanent worker was appointed, to take a lead on developing both the council and forum, with focus on increased and representative membership which leads to stability and effectiveness.

Three new members have joined the Children in Care Council, making this larger than the Care Leavers Forum. However, some young people who currently attend the Council will soon be 16 and move to attending the the Care Leavers Forum; this will help to achieve membership balance. As there is capacity in both groups for additional members, a drive is underway with professionals, carers and young people themselves to increase attendance and ensure that there is a balanced representation of young people accommodated in foster care, children's homes, semi independent and independent living.

## **2. How much did we do and how well have we done?**

Both the Council and the Forum have been involved with:

- Completing work on the Kirklees Pledge which has now been produced in two formats, one suitable for younger children (7 – 11) and one for those who are older (12 plus). This has now been launched via email communication from Senior Management and through the various teams, copies will be given to all children and young people as well as foster carers and professionals. A copy of each version of the Pledge is attached to this report.
- Consultation with Senior Management with regard to the Sufficiency Strategy. Their views and opinions have been taken into consideration and have influenced areas such as training for staff and improving the quality assurance process with regard to purchased placements.
- Consultation with the newly appointed Senior Mental Health Practitioner to consider what services are needed for care leavers.
- Consultation with the Placement Support Team in order to consider how young people can be involved in the recruitment of foster carers at an earlier stage. This led to a review of the young people's questions which are asked at foster carer panels and consideration is being given to other suggestions made, such as, more involvement in Skills to Foster and / or more opportunities for children and young people to talk informally with potential carers, to help them form an opinion which can then be considered in the overall recruitment process.

- Consultation with Management about what young people would want to see in the Local Offer for Care Leavers document (to be known as Kirklees Commitment to Care Leavers).
- Consultation with the Risk and Vulnerability Team about a new name for the team, evaluations to be given to young people when they have worked with them and a leaflet for young people which explains what they do.

### **3. What difference did we make for children?**

- A new and improved Pledge document which is child friendly has been produced
- Children and young people have influenced the training of staff and quality standards in respect of placements
- The views of young people influenced the designing of the new mental health support services which are delivered through the Placement Support Team.
- The views of children and young people have been sought so that their voice will have increased influence in the recruitment of foster carers
- The views of young people will be incorporated into the Kirklees Commitment to Care Leavers document
- The views of children and young people have influenced the new name of the Risk and Vulnerability Team to something which young people will feel comfortable with. They will also continue to work with the Risk and Vulnerability Team on literature which is appealing, informative and appropriate for young people
- Softer outcomes for children and young people involved in these groups have also achieved, such as new friendships, increased confidence and the development of debating, negotiation and presenting information skills.

### **4. What do we want to improve?**

- To increase the membership of both the Council and the Forum, to ensure that they are representative of all groups of children and young people.
- Improved links with managers of services, to ensure that there is an effective mechanism for communication and the development of services which are led by

children and young people, whilst also providing a forum for managers to consult children and young people.

- Action planning for January to July 2019, by establishing clear Action Plans for both the Council and the Forum
- Links with the Regional Children in Care Council meetings, in order to share ideas and priorities and also increase the voice and influence of children and young people on issues which affect young people across the region.