

Name of meeting: Corporate Parenting Board
Date: 18th December 2019
Title of report: Voice of the Child update

Purpose of report: To provide the Corporate Parenting Board with an update in respect of the Voice of the Child Plan.

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| Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards? | Not Applicable |
| Key Decision - Is it in the <u>Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports)</u> ? | Not Applicable |
| The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny? | Not Applicable |
| Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name | Tom Brailsford for Mel Meggs (11.12.19) |
| Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance IT and Transactional Services? | Not applicable |
| Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning Support? | Not applicable |
| Cabinet member portfolio | Cllr Viv Kendrick Children's |

Electoral wards affected: None

Ward councillors consulted: None

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? Yes

1. Summary

This report provides an update of the Voice of the Child Plan. The Voice of the Child Plan was developed through a the Voice of the Child Task and Finish Group with a key objective: To ensure that all children and young people are involved in the decisions that affect them; their participation is essential to improve services and respond to their needs, and the shared aim of their participation should be change; and to actively promote young people's participation in co-production and contributing to service development.

2. Information required to take a decision

No decision is required.

2. Implications for the Council

- **Working with People**
Not applicable
- **Working with Partners**
Not applicable
- **Place Based Working**
Not applicable

- **Improving outcomes for children**

The Voice of the Child Plan outlined expectations in relation to how we will engage with children and young people to elicit their views and ascertainable wishes and feelings. The key principles of the plan was to ensure the views of children and young people influence the care and services they receive and service development. The plan was to support improved outcomes for children, young people and their families by improving professional practice and the quality of service delivery.

The Voice of the Child Task & Finish Group was established in June 2018 and comprised representatives from teams and services across Kirklees Council. The objectives for the group were:

- To ensure that the Voice of the Child was promoted and on the agenda for each service within children's Services.
- To ensure that all children and young people are involved in the decisions that affect them; their participation is essential to improve services and respond to their needs, and the shared aim of their participation should be change; and to actively promote young people's participation in co-production and contributing to service development.

The group was responsible for developing the Voice of the Child Plan, oversight of the delivery and responsibility for quality assurance of each area within the plan, with the overall aim of working towards developing a culture within the workforce which supported, promoted and valued the participation of children, young people and their families. Below is a summary of the work the plan has achieved to date:

- Children's Services have a history of involving children, young people and their families in the recruitment of foster carers and professionals within the authority. Further work with HR to review involving young people in the wider recruitment of all staff has been undertaken, resulting in a finalised recruitment procedure. This is due to be considered by the Workforce strategy group for agreement and introduction.
- In order to ensure that elected members effectively champion the views of children, young people and their families *Total Respect* training was delivered by young people from the Children in Care Council in October 2019 to elected members, to support their understanding of the issues which affect children and young people who are Looked After and help them represent and promote the views of children and young people.
- A Youth Participation Vision task and finish group has been established with partners, to help develop a shared vision which will provide a common understanding of youth participation and why youth participation is a vital part of everyday practice. The group will focus on the identification and development of engagement resources, sharing of good practice and aims to become an effect conduit for two way dialogue with children and young people. The work of the group also includes the development of a Children and Young People's Participation Strategy.
- In order to ensure Learning and Development pathways promote the voice of a child, there have been changes made to the training provided to the Children's Social Care workforce. There is now an increased frequency of the delivery of the *Engaging the Mind of the Child* and the content has been developed to support practitioners to effectively engage with teenagers. Learning and development pathways for Social Workers have also been updated to ensure that, *Engaging the Mind of the Child* and *Total Respect* training is mandatory for all new starters. In addition to this, a training programme in relation to child development and attachment has been developed and is now available for the Children's Services workforce. In consultation with the Kirklees Safeguarding Partnership, this training is also available for partner agencies.
- The Children's Social Care Duty and Advice team have a '*Child's Voice guide*' and are utilising this when having contact conversations.
- A protocol has been drafted to ensure that concerns or queries raised by Looked After children and young people via the Children's Right's Team are considered and responded to in a timely manner. This protocol is at the consultation stage.
- The Children's Rights Team and the Child Protection and Review Unit have consulted with representatives from IT, to consider the development an app or alternative platform to enable Looked After children and young people to share their views on an on-going basis. How this could be achieved is currently being considered.
- There is a pilot working group consisting of Social Workers, Early Support workers and Child Protection Conference Chairs who are considering how best to obtain feedback/children's views regarding their experiences. The Early Support service

have committed to organising a Voice and Influence working group, and the Family Group Conference Team have collated feedback from Children and Young People which has demonstrated the impact of their service provision, the team intend to present their findings to other service areas.

- Children's Social Care audits have included contacting a small number of children and young people to obtain their views and experiences to inform the overall audit findings. However, the method used did not achieve meaningful participation, this is an area of development which will be considered within a new Children's Service's Quality Assurance Framework, due for consultation early in the New Year.
- Annual Fostering reviews now include input and feedback from children and young people to inform the review.
- **Other (eg Legal/Financial or Human Resources)**
Not applicable

3. Consultees and their opinions

Not applicable

4. Next steps and timelines

The Voice of the Child Task and Finish group has concluded and the stand alone Voice of the Child Plan has ended. The objective of the plan has been achieved in that capturing and strengthening the voice of the child is now a central aim for services when working with children. For Children's Social work, monitoring will continue via the Children's Social Work Improvement plan, to ensure that the Voice of the Child is an integral element of service delivery. Development work is being undertaken with the wider Children's Services, teams, with two Young People's Voice and Influence workers helping to embed and oversee the work, working in partnership with service areas and teams.

5. Officer recommendations and reasons

That the report be received and noted by the Corporate Parenting Board as per Section 13 of The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

6. Cabinet Portfolio Holder's recommendations

Not applicable

7. Contact officer

Anna Gledhill, Social Work Practice Lead

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8. Background Papers and History of Decisions

Not applicable

9. Service Director responsible

Tom Brailsford, Service Director, Resources, Improvement, and Partnerships.