

WIRRAL CHILDREN'S TRUST BOARD – 23 January 2017

Young People's Engagement and Participation

1.0 Background

1.1 Wirral has a strong record of involving children and young people in developing service delivery and in local democratic and community processes. In order to continue to ensure that young people are able to engage and fully participate in decision making and that services and organisations routinely involve them the Engagement and Participation framework will stay under review.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 The Framework comprises of three main elements, namely:

- **Youth Engagement Strategic Champions** - A virtual team of key elected members and chief officers across the private and public sectors and the voluntary, community and faith sector.
- **Youth Engagement Reference Group** – a reference group of officers who are have been trained in engaging young people and who can be brought together quickly to respond to need, co-ordinate children and young people's participation and engagement activities.
- **Youth Voice Group** – an overarching young people's group, with close links to ongoing work with Children Looked After (CLA), including the Children in Care Council.

3.0 Current Position

3.1 Youth Engagement Strategic Champions

The Framework for Young People's Engagement and Participation was launched at a 'Champion Event' on the day of the Youth Parliament in November 2014. The event enlisted a virtual team of officers from the private, public, voluntary, community and faith sectors to ensure Wirral's leaders fully support and champion positive youth engagement in Wirral. The event was attended by strategic managers from Children and Young People's Services, Police, Fire and Rescue Service, Public Health and NHS.

3.2 Youth Engagement Reference Group

3.2.1 The inaugural meeting of the Reference Group was held in April 2015, the group of officers and staff have been meeting bi-monthly since this time. Attendance is reflective of the wider partnership, with representatives from organisations such as Barnardo's, Magenta Housing, Merseyside Police and Wirral Girl Guides as well as members of the Youth Voice Group. The group were instrumental in co-ordinating the 2015 and 2016 Youth Voice

Conferences and Parliaments. The group have identified the following as priorities:

- The revision of the Charter of Participation and associated action plan
- The Youth Voice Group recruitment
- Promoting future United Kingdom Youth Parliament elections
- The planning of the 2017 Youth Voice Conference

3.3 Youth Voice Group

3.3.1 This is an open group which has been meeting for about two years. Since its inception the group has been involved with a number of initiatives, including:

- 2014, 2015 & 2016 Youth Conference planning, delivery and evaluation (see Appendix 1 for the 2016 Youth Voice Conference Report)
- 2014, 2015 & 2016 Youth Parliament debates and evaluation
- Framework Champion launch in 2014
- Wirral Youth Zone consultations
- Various consultation focus groups linked to Public Health strategies
- Staff interview panels
- Elected member training
- Consultation on youth engagement in relation to child sexual exploitation (CSE) and creating a CSE performance piece called 'Exploitation'
- Advising CAHMS regarding the self-harm and young people
- Creating and performing a piece which presented the model for the Healthy Wirral launch.

3.3.2 Future priorities for the group include:

- Recruitment to ensure representation from a wide range of youth organisations across Wirral
- Links to the four locality Youth Forums
- Planning for the 2017 Youth Conference and Parliament
- Inspecting youth provision

3.3.3 In order to ensure synergy with the Children in Care Council (CICC) – Youth Voice Group members attended CICC meetings and formal links have now been established with the Participation and Engagement Team, formally known as the Inclusion Team. The group will also develop strong links with the newly appointed LSCB Youth Engagement Worker.

4.0 Children Looked After

4.1 Children in Care Council (CICC)

4.1.1 The CICC meet once a month to ensure the views and ideas of children and young people looked after are listened to by those making decisions about them. They are involved in many interesting projects that make a difference for young people who are looked after. For example, the Fostering DVD and the 2016 CICC Conference (see Conference report Appendix 2).

4.2 Care Leavers Council (CLC)

4.2.1 The creation of a separate Care Leavers Council (CLC) for young people aged 16-25 has now been introduced. This was the decision of the Participation and Engagement Team and the current groups of CICC members. The new format generates wider discussions and opens up opportunities for greater team working whilst allowing Care Leavers to concentrate on issues that affect them.

4.2.2 The CICC and CLC are both involved with the fostering team and a young person now sits on the fostering panel. The groups are also involved with foster carer training, i.e. Life Skills and Connected Carers.

4.3 Children Looked After Events

4.3.1 A number of high profile events have been held recently including:

- CLA Success and Achievement Awards:
 - This event is growing every year, with nearly 300 people attending the event in 2016. 200 of them were young people aged 0-18, plus parents, carers and staff.
- Listen to Me Awards
- Young Inspectors
- Take Over Day
- Care Leavers Week
- CICC Conference

4.4 Recruitment and Selection

4.4.1 Monthly training is provided to young people and monthly interview dates are in place for young people to interview potential new staff members. Flexibility is offered to allow interviewing of senior positions, i.e. Independent Chair Safeguarding Children's Board, Deputy Director.

4.5 Research/Surveys

4.5.1 The CICC and CLA have been involved in a number of research projects and surveys, examples of which include:

- Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Health Passport
- Wirral Children's Services – Top three priorities for 2017
- Restructure (Young People and Foster Carers)
- Care Leavers Association – Health
- Housing
- Liverpool John Moore's Research Study
- From Care to Independence

- Children's Commissioner - Help at Hand
- LGBT

4.6 Website

- 4.6.1 <http://therightsideofcare.com/> is Wirral Council's online resource for local children and young people who are looked after. It is also a valuable resource for their carers and the professionals working with them. The site offers support and advice on a vast range of subjects: from adoption and fostering; to 'in care' advice, making a complaint and leaving care. <http://therightsideofcare.com/> also provides information to help young people get involved with the Children in Care Council. It provides contact information for key staff and office bases at the council, as well as a map of each office and the bus services that stop there. Launched in 2014, The Right Side of Care has had over 5,000 visits to the site in the last year and over 3,000 individual users.
- 4.6.2 Young people can keep up-to-date with the latest news from Children's Services via the site, which also includes news from the Teenwirral website. Recent additions to therightsideofcare.com include a games section, plus corporate parenting and advocacy information. These sections are to be developed further in 2017, alongside the possible development of an app or user account facility within the site.

5.0 Current Engagement and Participation Developments

5.1 Young People's Advisory Group (YAG)

A paper was taken to the Youth and Play Service Advisory Group (YAPSAC) in 2015 which recommended that YAPSAC be reviewed. This review has now been completed and, in future, the newly named Young People's Advisory Group (YPAG) will be an integral part of the Framework for Young People's Engagement and Participation, providing young people with meaningful opportunities to regularly engage with elected members in a safe and supportive environment.

5.2 Children and Young People's Reference Group

- 5.2.1 A children and young people's reference group for the Improvement Board has recently been established. The group has been developed through the Youth Voice Group and is made up of young people with a range of experiences, including young people from the Children in Care Council.
- 5.2.2 The group have already met on two occasions and, as well as getting to know each other, they are already bringing some really excellent ideas forward about how they will support and influence developments. The group will meet again in January 2017 to start to work up their action plan to achieve their goals.
- 5.2.3 The group have been considering how to reach out and gain the views of wider groups of young people across the Borough and through schools; how to get more involved in workforce development, particularly developing staff members skills in working with and engaging vulnerable young people; how to

become involved in scrutinising progress being made to improve services for children and young people and intent to report by involving local young reporters.

5.2.4 The group have fed back their views with regard to the Ofsted inspection and are looking forward to seeing the published improvement plan early in the New Year.

5.2.5 The group have looked at creative ways to meet key people in the improvement journey and are eager to work with them going forward. The group have a good deal of energy and passion and are keen to see improvements for children and young people.

5.3 Junior Safeguarding Children's Board

5.3.1 The Wirral Children's Safeguarding Board's (WSCB) Engagement Officer has been working to identify opportunities for engaging with children and young people through schools and current frameworks. She will also be consulting with young people from existing groups such as the Children in Care Council and the Youth Voice Group to identify their priorities for keeping safe.

6.0 Recommendations:

6.1 Wirral Children's Trust Board note the report.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Youth Voice Conference Report 2016



YOUTH VOICE
CONFERENCE REPOR

Appendix 2 – Children in Care Council 2016 Conference Report



Conference 2016
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