



# **A guide to good practice in the structure and running of a children in care council**

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## **Introduction**

The National Children's Bureau (NCB) in partnership with A National Voice was funded by the Department for Education to improve corporate parenting practice, working together with Children in Care Councils. The initial two year project from 2013-2015 was granted an additional year to March 2016.

The project involved the design and facilitation of a series of dynamic regional events between April 2013 and December 2015. A final national event was held in February 2016 to celebrate and provide an ending to the project.

The events were designed to provide opportunities for corporate parents to work directly with young people, to share ideas with other local authorities on how to strengthen their Children in Care Councils, explore how corporate parents and Children in Care Councils could work together more effectively, and raise the bar in terms of aspirations and actions to improve outcomes for children in care.

During these 24 events, attended by over 800 corporate parents, staff and young people from 99 different local authorities a wealth of information and examples of good practice were recorded. In addition, a call for more detailed case studies resulted in 15 examples of innovative and successful ways in which Children in Care Councils have resulted in positive improvements for young people.

This report seeks to bring together all this information into a guide to good practice in the structure and running of a Children in Care Council. All the ideas presented are from what we were told by those who attended our events. The term young people has been used throughout this report to cover all children and young people.

## **Structure, Constitution and Governance of Children in Care Council**

We found that Children in Care Councils work best when they have a well-defined purpose with clear areas of responsibility: for example, one group visited their local schools to help teachers understand the unique pressures facing children in care. Another group inspected residential care and health services, to recommend improvements.

The Children in Care Council members need to know their work makes a difference. The group should work closely with the most senior corporate parents - the elected member leading on children in care and the Director of Children's Services - who should feedback how the work of the Children in Care Council has fed into the decisions they've made.

An efficient structure for the group is one with a constitution, a schedule of activities and agenda to encourage people to take its work seriously. Providing a budget to cover transport costs, refreshments and incentives enables and encourages young people to take part.

The group should be set up to get the best from young people of different ages or at different stages of the care system, for example, by setting up a sub-group for the younger children or those leaving care.

Every looked after child should be aware of their Children in Care Council and how they can get involved. This can be communicated through newsletters, welcome packs and dedicated websites, or through direct contact with social workers or members of the children in care council.

Using new technology can also help engagement, for example, by setting up a closed Facebook group or using Skype to allow young people to participate in meetings remotely.

### **Warwickshire- Children in Care Council Constitution**

In Warwickshire a constitution for the children in care Council was agreed and signed by the Chair of the Children in Care Council, Leader of the Council, Head of Social Care and Practice Leader-Participation. This was followed by elections for the membership of the Children in Care Council. These together had the effect of increasing the status and legitimacy of the Children in care Council within the County Council structure.

The local authority Pledge should be at the centre of the work of the Children in Care Council. It can be used as a plan for improvement and a monitoring tool. Young people should be fully involved in the drafting of the Pledge with as wide a range of their views as possible incorporated into it.

### **Other Practice Examples**

- Pledge monitoring form used for young people to feedback how the authority is delivering on its promises
- Develop a rating system against the pledge
- Outcomes from a consultation event have been put into our pledge to improve practice

## **Membership and recruitment of Children in Care Council and its meetings**

Children in Care Councils need to engage a cross section of young people into their organisation. Some local authorities have developed a comprehensive approach to this and it seems more effective where there are different groups for different ages to cater for their different needs and abilities and stages of the care system i.e. junior in care council, in care council for young people, forum for care leavers. A virtual in care council can reach those who might not want to attend meetings, live far away or just want to dip in and out of what's going on.

The challenge still remains of how to engage children and young people whose voices are not readily heard such as those placed out of borough, or within secure settings, for example, or young people with disabilities, or those who might struggle to engage with this type of set up but have an important contribution to make nevertheless. Children in Care Councils should identify if there are any voices that are not being heard within their own authority.

Recruitment requires the full involvement of social workers and carers. They will not only need to be prepared to encourage young people to become members but transport young people to meetings. In larger authorities like county councils, meetings could move around the authority or there could be smaller locality groups meeting regularly with full County wide group meeting less frequently.

Young people should be rewarded for their involvement in the Children in Care Council. Some authorities have given payment and vouchers, others provided trips, residentials and days out for those who attend.

Many Children in Care Councils are predominantly made up of older young people. There needs to be a strategy for the retirement of older members and renewal of members. Recruitment is an ongoing task, there is never a time for complacency that the job is done.

### **Warwickshire – Election of Children in Care Council Members**

Warwickshire used the model of the Youth Parliament to hold elections for the membership of the Children in Care Council. In 2013 they held the first election; all young people in care were asked whether they wanted to stand for election. 40 said yes, and each drafted a manifesto. All young people were sent voting papers with the manifesto and asked also to vote for 12 members. The papers also listed 30 issues identified by young people and they could choose their top three.

160 votes were received out of 900 sent out. The response also set the agenda for the Children in Care Council with corporate parents. The second election was held in December 2014. Six members stood down and six more were elected. Before the elections there was some structure to the Children in Care Council, but how young people became members and how long they remained members was unclear. Many did not know about the Children in Care Council and the membership was predominantly older young people.

The new criteria within the Children in Care Council Constitution helped to phase out older young people to then let the wider looked after population decide who to elect onto the Children in Care Council. There was a need to increase the legitimacy and status of the Children in Care Council to enable a fairer way to decide who represents the views of the children and young people in care on the Children in Care Council.

## **Kent- Challenge Cards**

Young people can complete Challenge Cards that are sent to the Children in Care Council then the Corporate Parenting Board. These allow young people to challenge corporate parents about issues they face being in care. Corporate parents respond to the challenges, to the young person and the Children in Care Council.

### **Other Practice Examples**

- Holding four smaller, separate Children in Care Councils in each part of the County with full meetings twice a year.
- Using Skype for meetings for young people who cannot attend in person.
- Children in Care Council worked with family centres to gather younger children's views.
- Encourage young people to go out to children's homes to get new members.
- Day out for Children in Care Council, for members who have attended three meetings.
- Link membership to local authority leisure facilities for those who join Youth Council and Children in Care Council.
- Christmas party for Children in Care Council, staff and members.
- The young people are developing sub groups for different groups of children.
- Play scheme for children in care with older volunteers from the Children in Care Council.
- The Director of Children Services and Participation Worker went to IRO and fostering team meetings to promote the Children in Care Council and to ask for their support to recruit new young people.
- We now pay members for attending meetings and have a large committed group.
- The chair of Children in Care Council was introduced to the full council, the Mayor is hosting various events for the children, including a picnic on the lawn at the town hall and a mock council session when children can be the Mayor and wear his chains.

## **Communication with young people and setting Children in Care Council agenda**

All Children in Care Councils must find their own way to communicate with all young people, ensuring that the agenda for the Children in Care Council represents the views of as many young people as possible. There is no one right way and a complete communications strategy will incorporate as many methods as possible. Different groups of young people will need to be communicated with in different ways. Strategies should identify the additional methods of communication that will be used with young people with English as a second language or limited reading skills.

Many authorities publish newsletters for young people. Others have created specific web sites that are available to both staff and young people. There is a common view that word of mouth is a more effective tool than anything written. For this reason strategies should include how social workers and carers can be specifically targeted. Involving young people in either writing or quality assuring all materials sent to young people can ensure that the materials are accessible and engaging.

### **Newcastle – Voices for Choices**

A DVD was made by members of the Children in Care Council group "Voices for Choices". The DVD was used recently as a tool to help recruit new members to the group and this discussed and showed what the group is all about and what types of changes they have been able to achieve over the last few years. The DVD was also used in social care training and helped in the recruitment of new members to the Children in Care Council following the deletion of the participation post which led to the group struggling for numbers. New members reported excitement around creating an updated DVD featuring themselves.

### **Other Practice Examples**

- Look at designing an app which allows people outside the borough to access information.
- Welcome pack for all children and young people who come into care.
- Have welcome packs aimed at specific groups/ages such as 5-11 pack 14-16 pack, Leaving care pack, Pack for young people with disabilities, Pack for asylum seeking and refugee young people.
- Quarterly Children in Care Council magazines to all young people and carers written by Children in Care Council.
- Children in Care Council design and approve all young people friendly materials including PEPs, flyers for Independent Visitors and complaints leaflet.
- The Council have a designated worker for a set time each week to aid the Children in Care Council with any communications between the Local Authority and Children in Care Council. This has enabled the Children in Care Council to push forward with their plans, getting things right first time and really feeling listened to.
- Put information in mail outs to all young people in care with the Who Cares Trust magazine.
- One off and annual surveys have been used successfully to inform the agenda for Children in Care Councils. The results of these provide powerful messages to be used in work with corporate parents.

### **York - Show Me That I Matter**

All young people were invited to take part in a survey, either on their own or with the help of professionals. 55 young people, 25% of those in care, responded. Young people placed out of authority and with families were able to have their voices heard. The U Matter Report on the survey was circulated to the Children in Care Council, senior managers, members of the Corporate Parenting Board, staff, foster carers and other young people. The Report enabled the Children in Care Council to identify what areas of being in care were most important to children and young people and what they would like to change, it informed future pledges and was used by senior managers and elected members to inform future service delivery. It became a monitoring indicator for the Looked After Children Strategy.

### **Warwickshire – Consultation on Agenda**

As part of the election process for Children in Care Council members the papers listed 30 issues identified by young people and young people could choose their top three. 160 votes were received out of 900 sent out. The response set the agenda for the Children in Care Council with corporate parents.

## **Young Peoples' relationship with Corporate Parents, the role of Corporate Parents**

Young people from the Children in Care Council should be able to attend and play a full part in Corporate Parenting Boards and other fora. This represents the most influential role that young people can take. It does, however, present enormous challenges if young people's presence and involvement is not to be tokenistic and led by an adult agenda.

It is important to ensure that the structures and ways of working are appropriate to young people having their voice heard. Traditional adult meeting formats are probably not the best way of involving young people. There are many ways in which structures and ways of working have been designed to overcome the problems of young people's views being marginalised. In many local authorities young people have taken control of the whole or part of meetings, meetings have been held at venues more accessible to young people and corporate parents have become mentors to young people members of the Children in Care Council.

Elected members may need training to understand the concerns of young people and to be able to communicate effectively. In some authorities elected members have received Total Respect<sup>1</sup> or other equivalent training.

Contact between young people and elected members and senior managers should not be limited to formal meetings. Corporate parents should be encouraged to attend full meetings of the Children in Care Council, attend consultation and activity days and visit young people where they live.

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<sup>1</sup> Total Respect is a national award winning training resource delivered by care experienced trainers

### **Lancashire – LINX Takeover of Corporate Parenting Board meetings**

All Corporate Parenting Board meetings now allocate the first hour to a totally young person led session where issues identified by the young people are discussed and presented to the board in an interactive way. The performance report for the Corporate Parenting Board is shared with the young people from LINX before anyone else and they present their concerns from the report at each meeting. They also share feedback for the Children Looked After Young Inspectors' visits and reports at each Corporate Parenting Board meeting.

Every year in July a whole meeting is dedicated to the young people where they plan, chair and deliver the meeting, presenting issues that they feel strongly about, again in an interactive way. Young people from the Children in Care Council attend agenda setting and debrief meetings with the chair of the CPB.

### **Other Practice Examples**

- Children in Care Council Chairs have a meeting with the Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board at least once after every meeting.
- Nothing comes to a Corporate Parenting Panel that hasn't been to the Children in Care Council first.
- A Children in Care Council member co-chairs the meetings with Lead Member.
- In one local authority, young people did not like the term corporate parents – they came up with the term 'shared guardians' as corporate made them feel like utilities, and they stated they were not their parents.
- *"Corporate parents should come and have fun with us (Children in Care Council) on activity days"*.
- Children in Care Council got involved with the local authority in looking at budgets, savings and the potential impact on children in care.
- Question time with corporate parents.
- Councillors mentoring young people.
- The Children in Care Council meets bi-monthly with the Corporate Parent Board. The young people are full members of the Board. They have an hour at the end of these board meetings where they can speak up, important as people are spread far and wide and too much travelling takes young people out of school.

## **Activities, Initiatives and Projects of Children in Care Councils**

Where Children in Care Councils have a work plan, it seems to help to avoid over-consultation and makes clear what they intend to achieve over the coming year. Clear processes for prioritising and planning are important, for example, one authority seeks the views of its children in care population on an annual basis to identify and agree on the priorities for their Children in Care Council.

An agenda set by the young people themselves supported by corporate parents appears to be mutually beneficial to both.

The Children in Care Council is not just a "talking shop"; it is an opportunity for young people to develop ideas and projects that will improve the lives of children and young people in care and care leavers.

We have been told of many initiatives that seek to increase membership of the Children in Care Council or provide added value to the statutory services young people to receive. Many are about young people being involved in training of staff and carers, being included in recruitment or writing and designing packs and DVDs for children coming into care.

Other projects are about adding to leisure activities and providing volunteering opportunities. Many of these initiatives originated from ideas coming from young people, others were adult ideas that young people took on and contributed to their development.

Other activities see young people and corporate parents working together. These provide a practical focus to the work of corporate parent boards and young people's involvement in them. They give elected members an additional insight into what are the interests of and priorities for young people.

### **Newcastle - DVD**

Young people from the Voices for Choices Group made a video. It was used as a tool to help recruit new members to the group. It showed other young people what the group is about and the changes members had been able to achieve. The DVD was used in a meeting with The Corporate Parenting Advisory Commission. It also highlighted issues important to young people such as medicals not being held in school time and asking education mentors to stop wearing badges that identified them as supporting children in care. The DVD was updated by new members of Voices for Choices.

## **Cheshire West and Chester – Children in Care Council Trust Fund**

This fund was set up by an elected member to support the practical help promised in the Children in Care Council Pledge. It has been extremely popular with over 360 applications made to date by children and young people in and leaving care.

Young people have been able to access different opportunities through this funding and we are now in the process of designing a feedback system, so we can report on how young people feel they have benefitted from the trust fund.

It is co-ordinated through the Participation & Inclusion Team, applications are accessed in hard copy or electronically on the Children in Care Council website. It has been a huge success and ensures that a promise made by CWAC is kept.

It became evident that, given the detail in the Children in Care Council Pledge, not all things promised within The Pledge could be accessed from existing budgets within children's social care. In order to honour its promise the Corporate Parenting Panel took this issue seriously and has shown on going intention to replenish the fund as it is used. It started at £50,000. This amount was topped back up to £50,000 last year.

It has had a huge impact as it has provided for things like, taster driving lessons, interview and prom clothes, musical instruments and lessons, holidays, bikes, college and university courses and electronic equipment. This list is by no means exhaustive and the fund continues to be accessed on a regular basis. Work in 2016 will include developing a feedback system to allow children and young people to really talk about how the Trust Fund has benefitted them.

The Children in Care Council and the Corporate Parenting Panel agreed a criteria for applications and amounts awarded. An amount of up to £400 per child can be applied for in any 12 month period. The funding is not guaranteed however, if an adequate case is made by the young person and their worker, funding is always considered.

Decisions are very much made on a case by case basis and the amount of £400 is only a guide. In some circumstances more money may be awarded and often lesser amounts are needed. This criteria was developed and agreed directly with the Children in Care Council and has worked exceptionally well.

### **Milton Keynes – Children in Care Youth Group**

The Children in Care Youth Group started in 2014. The project was initiated by the Virtual School and Participation Officer, with support from the Children in Care Council -Today's Children, Tomorrow's Future This weekly youth group provides young people the opportunity to mix with other children in care (aged 8-18) for emotional and educational support, to experience new things, to develop skills for independence, to share views and ideas and to develop social skills. The group, which has 15-20 young people attending each week, offers sport, arts and crafts, support with homework, as well as a range of other activities. The group provides a meal which all young people sit down and share together.

The group is facilitated by qualified Youth Service staff with support from Children's Social Care, the Virtual School and Participation Officer. The Director of Children's Services attends on a fortnightly basis.

### **York – Speak Up and Hear My Voice Training**

The Speak Up and Hear My Voice training is delivered by care experienced young trainers and promotes the voice of looked after children and young people in their individual care planning. It helps services design and offer opportunities for involving children and young people within policy and service development and provides professionals with the opportunity to hear directly from children and young people in care about their experiences.

Training incorporates examples of good practice, the principles of the Total Respect training course and the "Listen to Me" film produced jointly by care experienced young people from York and Inspired Youth.

It is an excellent opportunity for staff and councillors to learn from young people themselves, whilst developing their skills and knowledge to actively promote children's rights and participation. Participants were asked what they would do differently as a consequence of attending the course. The responses were varied but included key issues such as "will never say LAC again", "will consider children's voice much more and fully understand their feelings" and "involve young people's views in service development".

**Views of a young trainer** *"The training has empowered the young people that delivered it as we have had full involvement in the process and can clearly see the positive impact it has made on professional's by enabling them to question their traditional practices in a controversial way by putting the children and young people in control. With advocacy staff as guidance we were able to represent all looked after people in York and share their and our opinions of how we would like to see the care system. "*

## **Hounslow – Independence Training Programme**

The care leaver's branch of the Children in Care Council developed a project to improve young people's experiences of the transition to semi-independence. A particularly successful part of this project was a 4-day independence training programme with a reward trip for all those who completed the course. Sixteen young people attended the training and learnt about housing, DIY, healthy living, conflict resolution, benefits and money management.

Another area of the project involved young people who had already been through the transition giving advice to young people about to go through it. This was in the form of a written article called 'Messages to my younger self'. As a result of this project young people will now be involved in the annual training for foster carers 'Preparing young people for semi-independence'.

16 young people attended the training and were able to access the reward trip at the end of the two weeks (they had to attend all sessions). Improving their knowledge and skills – helping them to feel more able to cope with the transition to independent living. Also, the "messages to my younger self" went out to all children in care aged 12+ to further the impact. As the project was from young people, the uptake of the course was much higher than anticipated. Young people attended all sessions and reported it to be helpful. Keyworkers were also appreciative of the services available to support their young people in a safe environment where everyone was experiencing a similar process.

Those young people involved in planning, were able to share their experiences with a much wider audience through the "messages to my younger self" part of the work. The project identified gaps in our services and a way for our young people to be able to be of service to their peers, promoting their self-esteem.

### **Other Good Practice Examples**

- Play scheme for children in care with older volunteers from the Children in Care Council.
- Run fun activities to encourage people to get involved; choir, football club, summer activities programme.
- Leisure cards for care leavers to enable young people to access local facilities.
- CAMHS worker for care leavers.
- Health passport for care leavers- the key information they need to know- previous history and needs and how to take care of yourself.

### **Other Good Practice Examples**

- A fund for young people to apply for grant to develop hobbies and interests.
- Self-esteem group train young people on how to create and deliver training.
- Young people should get involved in foster care training.
- Children in Care Council made a DVD for teachers about children in care.
- Children in Care Council support and train work around preparing social work students.
- Children in Care Council member goes to schools and colleges to explain to the teachers about children in care, what they need, what they might be going through.
- Attend head teachers meeting and do a presentation about what they can do to help children in care.
- New Job description include outcomes for children in care.
- Children in Care Council and Human Resources work together to develop a recruitment protocol.
- Young people on interview panels for children's services.

## **Support and Facilitation of Children in Care Councils**

To be successful a Children in Care Council needs to have good support and facilitation. This is usually provided by participation workers. These workers have a crucial role in both supporting the Children in Care Council and wider participation, and promoting the work of the group across all services for children in care.

There are many examples of support coming from outside children in care services. These might be from the Youth Service or Youth Council. In a growing number of authorities older care leavers are being employed as apprentices or trainee participation workers. This is providing valuable training and experience for the apprentices and providing positive role models for younger children and young people as well as increasing the support that Children in Care Councils receive.

### **Milton Keynes – Children in Care Youth Group**

The Children in Care Youth Group is facilitated by qualified youth service staff with support from Children's Social Care, the Virtual School and Participation Officer.

### **Warwickshire – Youth Council Support**

The Children in Care Council is supported by the same staff as Youth Council and Youth Parliament representation.

### **Devon – Stand Up! Speak Up!**

Devon County Council have recently recruited two care leaver corporate apprentices into our team and two care leaver work experience candidates into our Social Work Academy. The ethos is to have the voice of care experienced young people at the heart of the work we do. This is having a significant impact on the service, with young people's voices directly being channelled into policy and decision making and is helping our young people to develop their personal skills and individual careers. The scheme has built confidence and skills for the young people employed and is allowing them to make the step into the world of work in an environment that is empathetic and supportive. By truly putting young people at the heart of strategic level decision making the wider impact on the lives of children and young people is that the service they receive is child centred.

In addition to the recruitment and selection another great piece of work has been the development of a training programme for ASYE's.<sup>2</sup> The four employed care leavers worked with another four care leavers to engage with their wider community. They identified issues from the bottom up (building relationships, diversity in a rural community, teenage pregnancy, moving to independence, the value of participation, mental health and wellbeing) and wrote their own training programme, drawing on their life experiences to encourage the social workers to challenge their practice. This was so powerful it is now being extended across the service other agencies and will be filmed.

For the scheme to work the young people need to be situated in a team that is suitably trained and has the time to provide the additional support required to help the young people flourish.

### **Kent – Virtual School Participation Team Care Leaver Apprentices**

The VSK Participation Team employs eight care leaver apprentices to help deliver participation and engagement children in care & care leavers. The apprentices are required to work towards their NVQ in Business and Administration and have one day a week set aside for their studies.

Having care leaver apprentices raises the profile of children in care and care leavers and helps to ensure the voice of the child and young person is central to service design and delivery in Kent. The Apprentice Team act as a source of support for a variety of services and are often asked to participate in meetings that fall outside the remit of VSK. Three of the apprentices are co-opted on to the Corporate Parenting Panel which allows them to challenge and speak directly with the Corporate Parents and Senior Managers and then report back to the Children and Young Peoples Councils. Having Care Leaver apprentices has enriched our service and Specialist Children's Services but they do require a lot of support if they are going to succeed so it is important that this is recognised from the beginning and that support for them is in place.

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<sup>2</sup> The **ASYE** is a twelve month programme for assessing newly qualified social workers (NQSWs). It supports the NQSW during their first year in employment, helping them to develop their skills, knowledge and professional confidence

### **Rochdale – Listen Up Group**

The local Health Authority and Youth Service worked with young people to create a poster called My Perfect Health Professional. In partnership with the Local Authority they requested that the Youth Service undertake a piece of work with a group of young people and care leavers to ascertain their previous experiences of accessing health services. It was felt that there was a need to consult with care leavers and young people who are not routinely consulted with due to lack of engagement. This included young people whom had accessed a number of health services to include CAMHS and substance misuse services. To promote engagement of these young people the Local Authority provided a voucher for those taking part.

### **Cross authority cooperation**

Using the example of the Taking it to the Next Level events there have been examples of local authorities working together to share experiences and bring new ideas to their Children in Care Council. These have been on an informal level as well as organised meetings and events

### **North Tyneside – Regional Meeting**

Early in 2015 a member of the Children in Care Council said she would like to meet other groups and work together with them. She was supported to apply for some money from 02 Think Big, and with this money the group hosted an event in North Tyneside and invited all the other regions Children in Care Councils. 10 out of 12 attended and all were really keen to work together. Following this the staff met to work together and support the young people to achieve the goal they had to work together.

From the discussions they had in the initial meeting a theme came up that lots of the areas would like to see improvements in the Leaving Care. There seemed to be inconsistency across the different areas as to the service care leavers get. The young people decided they would benefit from a weekend residential together so they can start their work on trying to improve this, so in October 30 young people attended an outdoor activity residential on Coniston Water. They all got to know each other, built some great friendships and used the evening to plan how to take their work forward.

They are busy working in their areas now to promote the six areas of change they would like to see in terms of improving leaving care and are also planning a big conference in July to be held in North Tyneside. The young people are hoping to get the Children's Commissioner, some MPs and numerous key decision makers to attend. Already due to the promotion being done in North Tyneside – one of the campaign strands has been achieved. The young people were unhappy as when you turn 16 you automatically get moved over the leaving care team and get a new social worker. The young people were unhappy about this, in particular those who had younger siblings, as they then had different social workers.

The young people asked that all children in care keep their social worker until 18 instead. Due to this being raised by the young people this has already been implemented by North Tyneside Council which has changed its service structure to meet the wishes of the young people. By doing this campaign the Regional Children in Care Council could potentially improve services for every looked after child in the region.

## Service Review

Local authorities have incorporated the skills and knowledge of Children in Care Councils as an important element of reviewing the effectiveness of services. Examples include young people being members of the Corporate Parenting Board, or as part of scrutiny committees. Young people including care leavers have acted as mystery shoppers to help improve services, consultation and get information on a range of different services and support. Other local authorities have commissioned the LILAC Assessment process to improve the effectiveness of the work of the Children in Care Council and wider participation and consultation.

### **Cumbria – LILAC**

A National Voice acted as a 'supportive and critical friend', providing an external LILAC Assessment of how well we listened to children and young people in care; It helped focus on what was needed to be done to ensure their voice was better represented and more accountable; and children and young people were provided with opportunities to be active in their own care.

The Corporate Parenting Pledge (known as Cumbria's Promise) and the role of Corporate Parents working with the Children in Care Council has been reviewed and updated.

It worked out much better than was expected. The young people from A National Voice who undertook our LILAC assessment were clearly very skilled, they knew what excellent looked like, and understood what it was like to be care-experienced. We were presented with a really clear assessment of the progress to date and the steps needed to move towards excellence. We implemented an action plan which had buy-in from senior leadership, to ensure we achieved all of the recommendations from the LILAC Assessment. Our Children in Care Council's and Care Leavers Forum were key partners in achieving the recommendations. Our looked after children and young people have clear lines of communication. Our Children in Care Councils worked in partnership with senior leadership to review and update the Cumbria's Promise. Everyone who has made a written commitment to Cumbria's Promise is identified by a badge which looked after children and young people and their carers can recognise and use to complement and challenge the services they receive.

Our Children in Care Council Elected Member Champions (Corporate Aunties and Uncles) have clear terms of reference, developed in partnership with the Children in Care Councils and endorsed by the Corporate Parenting Board.

We now have care-experienced young people engaged in a Cumbria wide project called RESPECT that focuses on the relationship between children and young people and those responsible for their care e.g. Social Workers, Children's Homes, IRO's etc. The RESPECT project is about listening to children and young people who are looked after and taking account of their voices in their own care. The young people are making clear judgements on the services received, and their findings have been presented to the Corporate Parenting Board for consideration and action.

### **Other Practice Examples**

- Sub-groups of Children in Care Council in different service areas to feed into scrutiny panel etc. or different.
- Young people representing and championing different interest areas like their corporate parent counterparts in their councillor roles.
- Some young people have been given the opportunity to take on the role of young inspector providing a young person's perspective.
- Young people interviewing their peers about their experiences to feed into service reviews and inspections.

## Appendix

### Contact details for the case studies

1. Cheshire West and Chester - CiCC Trust Fund - [Kim.Brooman@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:Kim.Brooman@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)
2. Cumbria – LILAC Assessment - [CICC@cumbria.gov.uk](mailto:CICC@cumbria.gov.uk)
3. Devon - Care leaver corporate apprentices and work experience - [\*\*participationchildrensocialcare-mailbox@devon.gov.uk\*\*](mailto:participationchildrensocialcare-mailbox@devon.gov.uk)
4. Kent - Virtual School Participation Team - [VSK\\_Participation@kent.gov.uk](mailto:VSK_Participation@kent.gov.uk)
5. Milton Keynes – Children in Care Youth Group - [childprotectionadministrators@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:childprotectionadministrators@milton-keynes.gov.uk)
6. Devon - Care leaver corporate apprentices and work experience - [\*\*participationchildrensocialcare-mailbox@devon.gov.uk\*\*](mailto:participationchildrensocialcare-mailbox@devon.gov.uk)
7. Hounslow 4-day independence training programme - [Emma.Worthington@Hounslow.gov.uk](mailto:Emma.Worthington@Hounslow.gov.uk)
8. Lancashire - CiCC Structure and Communication - [kate.baggaley@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:kate.baggaley@barnardos.org.uk)
9. Newcastle - DVD to help recruit more young people to CiCC - [\*\*voices.choices@newcastle.gov.uk\*\*](mailto:voices.choices@newcastle.gov.uk)
10. North Tyneside - Young people application for funding for Regional CiCC Meeting – [cicc@northtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:cicc@northtyneside.gov.uk)
11. Rochdale - My Perfect Health Professional - [social.services@rochdale.gov.uk](mailto:social.services@rochdale.gov.uk)
12. Warwickshire – Elections to CiCC - [cicc@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:cicc@warwickshire.gov.uk)
13. York -\_Show Me that I Matter – U Matter survey - [showmethatimatter@york.gov.uk](mailto:showmethatimatter@york.gov.uk)
14. York - Show me that I Matter – Speak up and hear my Voice - [showmethatimatter@york.gov.uk](mailto:showmethatimatter@york.gov.uk)

