

SHOW ME THAT I MATTER

YORK'S CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2016- MARCH 2017

INTRODUCTION

Show Me That I Matter (SMTIM) is the name of York's Children in Care Council (CiCC). Monthly panel meetings are held for young people to raise and discuss issues that are important to them, with the aim of shaping and improving services for children and young people in care in York. The panel is facilitated by members of Speak Up, York's Children's Rights and Advocacy Service, and elected members are invited to each meeting.

The aim of this report is to detail the issues identified by the CiCC, how these issues are being addressed and what issues are still to be taken forward. This report will also detail professionals and partner agencies that met with the CiCC, the outcomes of these discussions and different projects that the CiCC are involved in.

PANELS: SMTIM, I MATTER 2 AND I STILL MATTER

SHOW ME THAT I MATTER

SMTIM consists of up to twelve care experienced young people, aged between 13-19 years. The panel meets monthly at West Office to discuss issues that are important to children and young people in care in York. Any issues raised are fed back to senior managers, with the aim of helping to shape services for children and young people in York. Young people regularly invite professionals and agencies to attend the panel to discuss issues and give feedback on service provision. In addition to this SMTIM hold informal planning meetings and focus group as and when required.

Young people chair the panel meetings, with support from Speak Up. The positions of chair and vice chair are voted for by young people every twelve months. This year young people decided to change this slightly and appointed two young people as co-chairs. Young people are encouraged to take on other formal roles within the panel but to date haven't taken up this opportunity.

I MATTER 2

I Matter 2 is a sub-group of SMTIM, jointly delivered by Speak Up and the Looked after Children's Support Team. This group meets monthly at Hamilton House and is aimed at younger children in care, aged 8-13 years.

The group has a more informal, activity based approach, allowing a relaxed environment for children and young people to share their views and raise any issues. Issues raised at I Matter 2 are shared with the SMTIM panel, who are then able to take these forward with senior managers and Councillors. In light of the difference in approaches of the two groups a degree of flexibility is needed to ensure that children and young people are able to participate in whichever group they feel more comfortable accessing.

I STILL MATTER

I Still Matter was set up in October 2016 as a second sub-group of SMTIM, specifically to look at leaving care issues. It is jointly delivered by Speak Up and the Pathway Team and meets monthly at West Offices. Issues raised by the group are fed directly into SMTIM by two representatives from the group.

WORK CARRIED OUT

Between April 2016 and March 2017 SMTIM carried out 11 formal panel meetings, 20 focus groups and 2 social events / activity days. In addition to this a number of panel members have participated in 7 conferences, 15 interview panels and a variety of training sessions throughout the year.

CONTACT WITH PROFESSIONALS

SMTIM have invited a number of professionals to attend panel meetings and focus groups, either to address specific issues raised by the panel or after a request to attend to seek the panel's views.

Contact with professionals	
April 2016	Jon Stonehouse, Eoin Rush, Judy Kent
May 2016	Judy Kent and Luke Rodgers
June 2016	Helen Bromley (IRO), Sarah Olorenshaw (IRO) and Claire Mo (IRO).
July 2016	Anna Buchan and Sue Ward
August 2016	Judy Kent
September 2016	Sarah Clarke (Virtual Head)
October 2016	William Shaw – Wellbeing Team, Observer: Madeleine Morrison (Student Social Worker)
November Focus Group	Karen Hedgley and Sue Ward
February 2017	Joint meeting with Corporate Parenting Board
March 2017	Sophie Keeble, Sarah Clarke

REGIONAL MEETINGS, CONFERENCES AND AWARD CEROMONIES

Regional Children in Care Council

The Yorkshire and Humberside Children in Care Council meets periodically in various locations across the region. Young people's meetings and professional's meetings take place separately and are an opportunity for different local authorities to meet, share and discuss

their CiCC with neighbouring authorities. Representatives from SMTIM and Speak Up have attended Regional CiCC meetings.

In February 2017 a young people's regional meeting was hosted at West Offices, enabling members of SMTIM to give feedback on York's behalf. Regional meetings provide local authorities with the opportunity to share examples of work and good practise and to raise any ongoing issues.

Princes Trust Conference

October 2016 SMTIM was invited, alongside Inspired Youth, to attend the Princes Trust Conference following the launch of the Aspire to More Project, which highlights the importance of role models for care leavers and children in care. SMTIM co-chairs presented at the conference which took place in the Houses of Parliament and was attended by care leavers, professionals and the Children's Minister.

Virtual School Conference

SMTIM were asked to present at the Virtual School Designated Teacher Conference that took place in December 2016. Representatives from SMTIM spoke about improving the PEP process for children and young people in care and delivered a Speak Up and Hear My Voice workshop for professionals.

Catch 22 Award

In October 2016 SMTIM were shortlisted for two Catch 22 Awards for the Aspire to More project. Representatives attended the celebration event during care leavers week and came first for Best Pitch and Poster Award.

Kids Count Award

In November 2016 SMTIM's Aspire to More project won a national award from the charity Kids Count, for 'Most Inspirational Youth Campaign'. Representatives from SMTIM attended the awards ceremony that took place in the House of Commons, alongside MPs, peers and other inspirational young people. The award was presented for making an outstanding contribution by being the most innovative youth-inspired online campaign.

York Community Pride Award

SMTIM were nominated for 2 awards in the 2016 Community Pride Awards; Spirit of Youth and Best Community Project. Representatives of SMTIM attended the ceremony, where they received runner up awards.

INTERVIEW PANELS AND TRAINING

SMTIM members continue to have involvement in the recruitment and training of professionals. Young people's interview panels have been in high demand throughout 2016-2017, with SMTIM sitting on 15 interview panels for roles in Children's Social Care, including senior management posts.

Speak Up and Hear My Voice training was developed in 2015 as a direct response to SMTIM's views on the importance of reducing stigma faced by children and young people in care. With the support of Speak Up young people designed a training programme which features the Arts4Care film, "Listen to Me" that was produced in 2014 with Inspired Youth. The training, whilst providing professionals with the opportunity to hear directly from children and young people in care about their experiences, also offers practical tools and resources as to how practice and service development could be adapted to embed participation. Young people have continued to co-facilitate this training with Speak Up and have delivered training to elected members and a variety of professionals across Children's Services.

KEY ISSUES RAISED

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Health Assessments

SMTIM were asked to take part in a piece of work to look at how health assessments are carried out with children and young people in care. An initial focus group took place with Karen Hedgley and Sue Ward to look at health assessments and continued work is taking place around the design and development of a leaflet for children and young people about their health assessments.

Mental Health Awareness

SMTIM members said that they thought more awareness was needed of mental health and the services available, amongst young people. SMTIM were of the view that young people in care have a variety of different experiences which can be traumatic and therefore need to ensure they are able to access the right support. SMTIM raised this issue with Jon Stonehouse and Eoin Rush when they attended the panel in April, and discussed the role of Wellbeing Workers that were being rolled out across schools, as well as the Minding Minds Scheme that was developed by the Youth Council. Following on from this SMTIM met with William Shaw to hear more about the Wellbeing Worker role and subsequently delivered a training workshop to the staff team.

SMTIM said that they would also like to devise a short film highlighting some of the issues faced by young people in care, with a particular focus on mental health, in an attempt to raise awareness amongst young people.

EDUCATION

SMTIM were approached by the Virtual School regarding Personal Education Plans and how professionals could better engage children and young people in the process. Sarah Clarke attended the panel in September 2016 to discuss this, when young people spoke about the importance of children and young people deciding themselves how they would like to feed into their PEPs. They also agreed to present their views at the Designated Teacher Conference that took place December 2016.

IT PROVISION

SMTIM raised the issue of internet access and laptops as something that they felt needed addressing. Young people debated at length the benefits of having adequate IT provision and internet access and the impact that this can have if they don't have access. In particular young people wanted to ensure that all young people had internet access as they viewed this as essential, both in relation to their education and social interaction. They were also of the view that, where appropriate, consideration should be given to young people having their own laptop. Sarah Clarke and Sophie Keeble attended the panel in March 2017 to hear SMTIM's views and agreed that further discussions would take place around how these issues could be addressed.

LEAVING CARE

Rights and entitlements

SMTIM members had a number of questions relating to the support available to care leavers; in particular they wanted more information about when the Pathway Team start working with young people, when their Pathway Plans should be started and how young people were informed about their rights and entitlements post 16. Speak Up were able to answer their specific questions regarding Pathway provision and clarified that it was the social workers role to ensure that young people had access to the necessary information but that IROs would also check this at the young person's review once they reach 16. Young people were also reminded about the SMTIM website that contains Information about rights and entitlement.

Advocacy for leaving care

SMTIM raised their unhappiness that advocacy for care leavers wasn't something that Speak Up could provide and that any requests for advocacy are signposted to York Advocacy, who offer independent advocacy to vulnerable adults. Young people were of the view that for

young people leaving care, being able to access this from a service already known to them was crucial. For those who had accessed advocacy from Speak Up whilst in care, they wanted to be able to continue to access this as care leavers. This issue was raised with Jon Stonehouse and Eoin Rush in April 2016 when it was acknowledged that leaving care can be a difficult time and that this was something that would need to be considered further.

SOCIAL WORK INVOLVEMENT

The Children's Social Care undertook a re-structure in September 2016, having a major impact on how children and young people's cases are managed. SMTIM were in support of the new structure which created a Permanence Team dedicated for children and young people in care. However, they reported that for some young people the process had involved multiple changes of workers and this had been difficult. It was agreed that the U Matter Survey could capture young people's experience during this difficult time.

SMTIM could see the benefits of having a team that was dedicated solely to young people in care and felt that this provided an opportunity to build closer links between SMTIM and the social work team. Therefore, in March 2017 the Permanence Team and the IRO Team were invited to a SMTIM Bake Off event, which gave professionals and young people the opportunity to familiarize themselves with a focus on how best to engage young people in the review process.

ONGOING PROJECT WORK

ASPIRE TO MORE – RAISING ASPIRATIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

The Aspire to More project was created in partnership with Inspired Youth as a direct result of SMTIM's anti-stigma campaign. The project introduced young people in care to inspirational care leavers who they interviewed about their life journey and which are shared at <https://aspiretomore.wordpress.com> through a series of blogs and posters. During this project young people had the opportunity to interview a number of successful care leavers including published authors Jenny Molloy and Paolo Hewitt.

In September 2017 SMTIM held a launch event in West Offices and featured in both the local and national press. The blog, which has continued to receive national press coverage, is still ongoing and new role models are continually being added.

ROOM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

SMTIM said that they would like to be involved in developing a space in West Offices that that was more appealing to young people; that was bright and welcoming to young people, whilst maintaining its professional look and functions. Young people made a variety of suggestions about how this could be done and met with Facilities Management to discuss

these. It was agreed that SMTIM would work with a professional artist to create a piece of wall artwork that would be displayed in the King John room and that the Aspire to More images would be displayed in each of the downstairs conference rooms in West Offices.

MAKE YORK HOME PROJECT

SMTIM were invited to take part in the Make York Home Innovation Project which looked at the emotional, practical and professional support that foster carers need in order to provide safe, caring and stable homes in York to children and young people in their care. Although young people did not want to attend all the projects 'sprints', they were represented by Speak Up throughout and took part in two co-production events organised by the project leads.

BRIGHT FUTURES & TAKEOVER

As a direct result of SMTIM raising the issue of work experience for young people in care, the Bright Futures project was set up in April 2016. The project is a joint initiative between York Cares and Speak Up and is externally funded by the Careers and Enterprise Fund until August 2017. Bright Futures aims to support young people to further develop their skills, knowledge and attributes, providing experiences to enhance their curriculum vitae and potentially lead to future employment. A series of skills-workshop, behind the scenes visits, taster sessions, work placements and takeover opportunities are delivered to provide practical and meaningful experiences for young people within their chosen area of work.

SMTIM have continued to provide consultation on the project and will play an active role in the formal evaluation of the project that is being carried out by researchers at the University of York.

SUMMARY

SMTIM have achieved a great deal within the past twelve months through continuous work dedicated to improving services for looked after children and young people in York. The work SMTIM have taken part in illustrates the growth and value of the CICC, both at a local and national level.