

SHOW ME THAT I MATTER

YORK'S CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

Show Me That I Matter (SMTIM) is the name of York's Children in Care Council (CiCC). The CiCC is made up of three groups: the Show Me That I Matter panel, Speak Up Youth and the I Still Matter Care Leavers Forum. Young people meet at the different groups to raise and discuss issues that are important to them. Their overall aim of the CiCC is to provide an opportunity for care experiencing children and young people to help shape and improve services. SMTIM and ISM members are financially rewarded for their time and effort with a stamp system in operation, enabling young people to receive a £20 cash reward for attending 3 sessions.

The aim of this report is to detail the activity of the CiCC and issues identified by the members of these groups, who represent children and young people in care in York. The report will look in depth at each of the three groups that make up the CiCC and focus on how issues are being addressed; detailing discussions had with professionals and partner agencies, highlighting any issues still to be taken forward and providing information on the range of different projects that the CiCC has been involved in.

SHOW ME THAT I MATTER

SMTIM currently consists of 10 young people in care, aged between 13-17years. The panel meets on a monthly basis at West Offices to discuss issues that are important to children and young people in care in York. Any issues raised are fed back to senior managers in the quarterly meetings, with the aim to help change and shape services for children and young people in or leaving care. Young people regularly invite professionals and other agencies to attend their meetings to discuss a range of issues and to provide feedback on service provision.

SMTIM have recently changed the structure of their meetings. They continue to hold meetings monthly but now invite key decision makers (elected members and senior council officers) to every 3rd meeting to feedback to them on the work they have been doing. This way of working allows SMTIM to fully explore the issues, gain a better understanding and take part in more focused work before they feed this back to key decision makers.

WORK CARRIED OUT

SMTIM have worked with a number of different professionals both in panel meetings and focus groups, either to address specific issues raised by young people or after receiving a request to attend from a professional or service. Three identified elected members attend every quarter, along with a senior manager, to ensure that decision makers hear direct from young people.

Contact with Professionals	
April 2017	Tony Woodcock and Chez Adamson (YAFCA) and Cllr Runciman
June 2017	Cllr Rawlings and Cllr Mason
July 2017	Sophie Keeble, Cllr Rawlings, Cllr Barnes and Cllr Runciman
Sept 2017	Cllr Rawlings and Cllr Runciman
Oct 2017	Cllr Runciman and Cllr Barnes

Nov 2017	Sarah Wild – Fostering and Cllr Rawlings Matt Stroud – IT Focus Group
Dec 2017	Jon Stonehouse, Maxine Squires, Sophie Keeble and Cllr Runciman
Jan2018	Maxine Squires and Niall McVicar
Feb2018	Karron Young, Gill Clapham, Phil Taylor, Julia Massey and Melody Hardcastle.
March 2018	Claire Mo, Cath Short and Emily Wood – Permanence Team

Princes Trust - Young Researchers event

Two young people were supported to attend a Prince’s Trust event in Manchester in April 2017, to hear about the findings from the five year research project “From Care to Independence”. The two young people had previously been interviewed for the project and so were invited back to hear directly from the Young Researchers.

SCIE Working Group event

The Social Care Institute of Excellence established an ‘Expert Working Group’ to focus on the mental health and wellbeing of looked after children and care leavers. A group of young people attended the event in London in April 2017 to contribute in their views.

Children’s Media Conference

SMTIM were invited to present at the Children’s Media Conference in Sheffield in July 2017. Two young people delivered a closing presentation about how the CiCC has used media in its projects to inform young people and challenged the audience to portray more positive role models for young people in care within the media.

Education presentation at York St John University

SMTIM co-presented with members of the Permanence Team to a group of first year students studying education at York St John University. Two young people from SMTIM attended to share with the students what had made a difference to them within their education provision.

Regional Children in Care Council Residential

In February 2018, 5 young people from SMTIM and Speak Up Youth attended the Yorkshire and Humber Children in Care Council’s residential at Kingswood, Dearne Valley. The purpose of the event was for the different authorities to discuss the role and the importance of a CiCC. They were consulted on the different issues identified by each authority, to shape future regional work, and worked with representatives from the Childrens Commissioner’s Office on the design and content of a national website for young people in care.

KEY ISSUES

Supervision of young people

One issue raised by young people was that some thought that the levels of supervision that young people received in some placements were excessive, and as a group they decided that they would like to explore this further. A subsequent group discussion took place and young people reported mixed experiences, with some young people having what they viewed as excessive or unfair restrictions around being able to attend or host sleepovers or parties. Some

young people felt the level of information foster carers wanted to know about what they were doing on a day to day basis was unnecessary and fed-back that this could feel intrusive. This was shared with the fostering team and clarification was sought regarding what guidance was provided to foster carers.

Fostering assessments

Young people raised the question of what checks and assessment are carried out when recruiting foster carers, to ensure that only the right people were approved. A member of the Assessing Permanent Carers Team was invited to a subsequent meeting and shared detailed information about the assessment process. Young people highlighted the importance of eliciting children and young people's views on placements and quality of care and said that as a group they would like to be more involved in the training of foster carers. Links with the fostering team are ongoing and young people's views are being fed into the Fostering Review that is currently being carried out.

Communication with Social Workers

Relationships with social workers and difficulties in getting in contact with allocated workers were issues raised by young people. Some young people reported that they could not always contact their social worker when needed, other fed-back that they didn't always have a positive relationship with their workers. Possible reasons why were explored with young people, who were reminded that 'buddying' arrangements were in place for part time workers and that young people could access the team duty number if their social worker was unavailable. Anecdotal feedback from the young people present highlighted that not all had been given a Social Work Contact Card containing contact numbers. Young people were also reminded of their right to access advocacy if they wanted support in raising and resolving any issues with their social worker.

In response to issues raised, members of the Permanence Team were invited to attend a meeting with young people to look further at relationships and communication, with a particular focus on the first meeting the social worker has with a young person. They worked in small groups to discuss how communication could be improved between young people and their social workers and it was agreed that young people would continue to be involved in ongoing work with Permanence Team to create a team profile that could be shared with children and young people and an All About Me resource that could be used to help form relationships between children and young people and their social workers.

Working with Corporate Parents

A representative from SMTIM attended the Corporate Parenting Board meeting in September 2017 to share with elected members the 2016-17 Annual Report. Elected members had an opportunity to ask questions and thanked SMTIM for their ongoing work and commitment. Young people have identified that they would like to create a Corporate Parenting Pack for all elected members to ensure that they were all aware of their role as corporate parents and fully informed about the work of the CiCC. Initial discussions have taken place with the Group Manager for Permanence with a view to this piece of work being revisited later in the year.

Personal Education Plans (PEP) and Pupil Premium

The Virtual School Head teacher attended a meeting to share with young people information about recent and proposed changes within the Virtual School. Discussions took place around Pupil Premium Plus and the use of Personal Education Plans, and young people were invited to

share directly some of their experiences. Individual issues were taken forward by the Virtual School in relation to two young people present and representative from the Virtual School attended a subsequent meeting to discuss further how PEP reviews are conducted and what the young people's experiences of them were. Young people shared their experiences and highlighted the importance of allowing young people to decide what involvement they had in the meetings.

IT Provision

Young people raised the issue of internet access and IT provision, as some people reported that they had difficulties accessing these. It was agreed that a focus group would be held to further explore young people's views and experiences, and in November 2017 young people met with council officers to explore this further. After consideration by senior managers, they were satisfied that current provision was adequate and that there would be no change to the current IT offer to children and young people in care.

Apprenticeships and Traineeships

Young people spoke to council officers about what apprenticeships and traineeship opportunities were offered to young people in care and care leavers currently, and some of the difficulties young people face in accessing these. Young people gave feedback on what could be done to make young people more aware of the Council's apprenticeship offer and suggested improvements that could be made to further support young people to access these opportunities.

SPEAK UP YOUTH

Speak Up Youth was formed in September 2017 after All Together Active (ATA) and I Matter 2 merged together. The group is jointly delivered by members of staff from Speak Up, the Assessment and Contact Team and the Learning and Work Advisors. Speak Up Youth meets fortnightly at Moor Lane Youth Centre and is aimed at children and young people aged 10-16 years (19 years for those with additional needs). The group is currently made up of 13 young people aged 11-19 and has a more informal, activity based approach to participation. This allows children and young people to share their views and raise any issues in a relaxed environment.

The group often gets involved in consultation work that has been brought to the CiCC. Any issues that are raised at Speak Up Youth are shared with the SMTIM panel to take forward with senior managers and elected members.

WORK CARRIED OUT

Involving children and young people in their reviews

In November 2017 representative from the Permanence Team and Independent Reviewing Officers attended Speak Up Youth to discuss with young people their experiences of being involved in their reviews. This included speaking with young people to find out how they would prefer to be consulted in terms of their review and looking at the barriers that prevent young people from attending. This piece of work is ongoing and focusing on reviewing existing consultation forms and identifying possible tools that could be created to help promote young people's participation within the review process.

Health Assessment leaflet

Speak Up Youth took part in a consultation on the design of a new leaflet providing information for children and young people in care about their Health Assessments. Two versions of this leaflet have now been produced (one for younger children and one for young people) and will be rolled out by health and Children’s Social Care.

I STILL MATTER

I Still Matter is the name of York’s Care Leavers Forum, which is part of the wider Children in Care Council. It is aimed at care leavers and young people who are approaching the transition to leaving care, aged 17- 24 years. It is jointly delivered by Speak Up and the Pathway Team and currently consists of 7 members aged 18-22 years. The panel meets on a monthly basis at West Office and enables young people to raise any issues and identify and discuss key issues that are of significance to care leavers in the city. Elected members and senior council officers are invited to meet with the group on a quarterly basis, in line with the SMTIM meeting structure. Any issues raised are fed back to senior managers in the quarterly meetings, with the aim of helping to change and shape services for care leavers in York.

WORK CARRIED OUT

ISM have met with a number of different professionals, either to address specific issues raised by young people or after receiving a request to attend from a professional or service.

Contact with Professionals	
Aug 2017	Cllr Rawlings and David Purcell
Nov 2017	Mark Riddell (Adviser for care leavers for the DfE)
Feb 2018	Cllr Rawlings and David Purcell

NLCBF Workshop

Members of ISM attended a National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum Workshop in Sheffield in September 2017. The purpose of this event was for different authorities to share best practice in regards to the support they have for care leavers and celebrate care leavers and their success.

NNECL Conference

A member of ISM attended the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers Conference at the University of York in December 2017 and delivered a presentation on raising the aspirations of care leavers and the importance of role models. The aim of the NNECL is to ‘transform the progression of young people in or leaving care into and through further and higher education, by championing the continuous improvement of local practice, multi-agency partnerships and national collaboration.’

Inspection of Clarence Street with Youth Council

A member of ISM took part in the inspection of the Young People's Services at 30 Clarence Street. The service offers specialist information; advice and guidance for young people aged 16-19 including: face to face support, telephone support, drop in sessions and counselling services. Young people were supported to conduct an inspection of 30 Clarence Street to ensure that it worked and was the right environment for young people, exploring whether or not it would be a service they would use.

CSWM Webinar

Two members of ISM took part in a Children's Social Work Matters Webinar which focused on the importance of role models for children and young people in care. They shared the journey of the Aspire to More Project and discussed the importance of role models for children and young people in care, reflecting on how negative stereotypes and image can impact on the aspirations of children and young people in care.

Netherlands Care Leavers Conference

In association with University of York, a member of ISM attended an international care leaver conference in the Netherlands. With the University they created and co – facilitated a workshop around the theme of education and independent living.

KEY ISSUES

Education and support available

Young people identified that they would like to hear more about what support is available for young people wanting to go on to further and higher education and so subsequent discussions have taken place with members of the Pathway Team.

Council Tax

Young people raised concerns relating to council tax and the financial impact this could have on care leavers, raising the question of whether the Council could introduce an exemption for care leavers, in line with a number of other authorities. Young people met with senior managers and elected members to discuss and asked that consideration be given to this. This was taken away and after careful consideration it was decided that care leavers would be able to apply to a discretionary fund which would be means tested and it was agreed that the Pathway Team would work with and support young people who are eligible. This approach would also mean that young people who are in need but who are not care leavers would also be able to benefit from the fund.

Mental health support

Young people were asked to provide their views on a literature review and proposal regarding mental health support for young people in care and care leavers. The group reviewed the documents and provided their feedback.

Newsletters

Young people have been actively involved in shaping the design and content of the quarterly newsletters that go out to all care leavers up to the age of 21, sharing information about the work of the Care Leavers Forum and providing updates on rights and entitlements.

Advocacy for care leavers

Young people had previously identified that in their view, care leavers should have the same access to advocacy from Speak Up as children and young people in care. Historically requests for advocacy from care leavers had been signposted to York Advocacy, who provide advocacy for vulnerable adults. However, young people were of the view that for young people leaving care, being able to access this service from people already known to them could be crucial and without it some young people may feel isolated and unsupported. In January 2018, it was agreed that this could take place and as a result, the remit of the advocacy offer provided by Speak Up was extended to include care leavers up to the age of 21. Young people were pleased with this decision and wanted this to be promoted to care leavers via social media and quarterly newsletters.

Care leaver entitlements

Young people have worked with the Pathway Team to help redesign the existing information booklet about the Pathway service and leaving care entitlements. They will continue to work with the Pathway Team to help shape the final version of the new Leaving Care Offer that is in the process of being devised by Children's Social Care.

ADDITIONAL CiCC ACTIVITY

INTERVIEW PANELS

Young person's interviews have been in high demand again throughout 2017-2018, with CiCC members sitting on 10 interview panels for various roles within Children's Services, including Social Workers, Senior Social Workers, Advanced Practitioner, Advocacy and Participation Worker and Child in Need Manager.

TRAINING

The Speak Up and Hear My Voice training was developed in a direct response to SMTIM's views on the importance of reducing the stigma faced by children and young people in care. It was agreed that young people would co-design and deliver a training programme which would feature the Arts4Care film, "Listen to Me" that was produced in 2014. 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.

During this 12 month period 4 training requests were received. Young people were supported to deliver a training session for CYC Volunteers, two training sessions for prospective foster carers and a full days training for an external organisation providing mental health provision for young people; Care in Mind (the latter of which were charged delivery costs).

PRESS INTERVIEW

Members of SMTIM and ISM were invited to take part in an interview with York Press, who featured a two page spread about young people's views on the difference that foster care had

made to their lives. This also included a discussion about SMTIM and the effect that their involvement with the CiCC has had on them, at the same time as supporting a recent foster carer recruitment campaign.

A CARE STORY PROJECT

Mental health had been identified by young people as a priority for York's CiCC, as was documented in the last SMTIM Annual Report (2016-17). SMTIM were aware that a great deal of work was taking place in the city to address the issue of mental health and emotional wellbeing, but felt that young people in care needed to be more aware of mental health issues and the services available. Young people decided that they would like to create a resource to highlight 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. Therefore, in March 2017, ten care experienced young people came together from across the three participation groups to begin this work.

Young people took part in a series of workshops with Speak Up and Inspired Youth and had the opportunity to develop their creative writing skills, at the same time as exploring some of the feelings and emotions that are often experienced by children and young people in care. As part of the project young people were able to help to shape a fictional story that what subsequently published online by Inspired Youth.

Young people were able to articulate that without the right support and help some of these difficult feelings can impact upon placements and future relationships. They told us that through participating in the sessions they could see the benefits of talking about mental health; that early experiences stayed with them but that with the right support young people could be better equipped to manage these difficult feelings and emotions. The group identified key messages that they wanted to share with other young people and went on to design a booklet which they named 'You Are Not Alone'.

It is proposed that the You Are Not Alone booklet will be rolled out to all young people in care, aged 11-17 years, and the booklet will be included in the Information Packs that are routinely given out to young people when they first come into care. Young people went on to share information about how this resource was created with other Children in Care Council's across the region, via the Yorkshire and Humber Children in Care Council, and received a request from the Children's Commissioners Office for consent to include the resource on their new website for children and young people in care.

AWARDS CEREMONIES

Kids Count Award

A Care Story Project won a national Kids Count Award in December 2017, under the category of 'Most Inspirational Campaign on Youth Issues'. SMTIM attended the awards ceremony which took place at the House of Commons alongside MPs, peers and other inspirational youth groups.

York Culture Awards

SMTIM were nominated and won an award for excellence in cultural equality and diversity at the 2017 York Culture Awards. Representatives of SMTIM attended the ceremony which took place at York Minster in November 2017.

SUMMARY

Between April 2017 and March 2018, a total of 28 children and young people, aged between 10-21 years, have been involved in the CiCC across the three different groups. Out of these 28 young people, 7 were male and 21 were female, 7 had an Education and Health Care Plan and a further 5 were in receipt of other SEN services.

The 3 groups together have taken part in the great deal of activity over the 12 month period, having conducted 22 formal panel meetings, 14 youth group sessions, 13 project sessions or focus groups and 2 social events. In addition to this a number of CiCC members have presented at conferences and training sessions, taken part in interview panels and an inspection, attended awards ceremonies and a regional residential. There have been a total of 12 keys issues raised between the groups, including education and employment, placement issues, working and communication with professionals and the rights and entitlements of children and young people in care.

To conclude, York's Children in Care Council as a whole has achieved a huge amount within the last 12 months. They have done this through their continuous hard work and dedication to improving services for children and young people in care and care leavers in York. The work they have been involved in throughout 2017-18 demonstrates the value of the CiCC and how much they continue to grow. Their awards and recognitions as well as their invites to attend other events highlights how much the work they does is valued and recognised locally, regionally and nationally.