

SPEAK UP

York's Children's Rights and Advocacy Service

U MATTER SURVEY 2019

Executive Summary

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Background

The consultation was carried out with young people between November 2018 and January 2019. The U Matter Survey was made available to young people both online and as a paper copy. The online version could be accessed via Survey Monkey (surveymonkey.com) and this was promoted to young people via Facebook and the quarterly Children in Care Council Newsletter.

Participants

A total of 83 children and young people aged 11-21 took part in the consultation. Unlike previous years, the 2019 consultation was separated into a survey for children and young people in care (age 11-17) and a survey for care leavers (age 18-21). A total of 60 young people aged 11-17 took part in the survey, equating to approximately 55% of all children and young people in care within this age bracket. In regards to the Care Leaver Survey, a total of 23 care leavers aged 18-21 took part, which equates to approximately 28% of those eligible in this age bracket.

Summary of Findings

To summarise, findings are that the young people who took part in this survey report to be feeling happy and safe in their placements and are able to identify an adult in their life that they can trust. Improvements have been seen in young people's experience of having a social worker, with most knowing how to contact their social worker and describing them as being reliable. Pathway support is viewed by young people as very positive, with care leavers reporting that they are happy with the support they receive, including support with their education, training and employment. The majority of young people report that they have access to the health information they need and know who to talk to if they need support with their emotional wellbeing or access to support in school. On the whole, young people in care and care leavers have a good awareness of their rights and entitlements. However, improvements could be made in ensuring that young people have access to the New to Care Packs when they first come into care and also written information about placement prior to a move. Consideration should also be given to involving young people more in their reviews and PEP meetings, with more of an emphasis on young people having an opportunity to meet their IRO before the meeting and be involved in the planning of reviews and PEP meetings.

Placements – views of young people in care

The majority of young people in care reported that they felt happy and safe in their placement and were included in activities by their carers. There was a slight decline in young people who felt able to talk to their carers or social workers if they were feeling unhappy in their placement, however the number still remains high with just over three-

quarters reporting that they could. The provision of written information for young people, both when they first come into care in the form of the New to Care Packs and regarding a new placement for young people who are experiencing a placement move, have been identified as areas requiring improvement with relatively low numbers being able to recollect receiving such written information.

Experience of Social Workers – views of young people in care

The majority of children and young people knew how to contact their Social Worker, in line with previous years, and there has been a steady increase in those who know who to contact if their Social Worker wasn't available, with current figures demonstrating that just over three quarters of young people are aware of this. Three quarters of young people said that they thought their Social Worker was reliable (a significant improvement from previous years) and were happy with how often they saw them. Improvements have also been made in relation to young people's experience of how a change of Social Worker was done, with a decrease in young people stating that they had been unhappy with this.

Experience of Pathway – views of care leavers

In terms of care leavers experience of their Pathway Workers and their Pathway Plans, the majority of care leavers were extremely happy with the service provided. The majority of young people knew how to contact their Pathway Worker when needed and all young people stated they were happy with how often they saw their Pathway Worker and found that they took an interest in their views and opinions. All care leavers reported that they had contributed towards their Pathway Plan and had been able to discuss their future goals, however not all saw the value in these plans with only 64% stating they were important.

Reviews – views of young people in care

Improvements can be seen in the number of young people who know who their Independent Reviewing Officer is, which currently stands at 68%. However we have seen a decrease in those who report that they regularly attend their reviews as well as those who have an opportunity to speak to their IRO before review meetings. Improvements could also be made in involving young people in the planning of their reviews, as less than half stated that they had been involved in this.

Health & Well-being – views of young people in care and care leavers

Whilst a significant proportion of young people were aware of the purpose of Health Assessments, only half saw the value in having them. That said, the majority of young people in care felt that they had all of the health information that they needed. All the care leavers that took part reported that they were registered with a GP and the majority were registered with a dentist. Young people's feedback on support with emotional wellbeing remains positive with the majority of young people in care and care leavers stating that they knew who they could talk to if they needed help with their emotional wellbeing.

Education – views of young people in care and care leavers

The support that young people receive with their education from schools and colleges is reported as being high from the majority of young people and most young people were able to identify an adult in school that they could talk to, with young people naming various professionals including class teachers, designated teachers, pastoral workers and teaching assistants. Almost all young people felt that their carers took an active interest in their education however a significant proportion reported that they either didn't attend their PEP meetings or didn't find them at all useful. Encouragingly feedback from all care leavers about support with their education, training and employment was particularly positive, with all care leavers reporting that they knew how to access this support and the majority feeling that they had the right amount of support with this.

Family & Friends – views of young people in care and care leavers

In terms of seeing their family and friends, most young people in care and care leavers felt that had received a sufficient amount of support in this area and knew who to contact if they were unhappy.

Rights & Entitlements – views of young people in care and care leavers

Feedback from young people in care and care leavers showed that most had a good awareness of their rights and entitlements, with most young people reporting that they were aware of their right to make a complaint, the support available from the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service and from the Pathway Team. If improvements were to be made, it would be for more young people to be aware of the Violet Chambers Fund and the free Gym and Swim Pass, as around a quarter of young people reported being unaware.

Overall Experience – views of young people in care and care leavers

Finally, when children and young people were asked about their overall care experiences, feedback has been mixed but similar to previous years, with the majority of young people rating it somewhere between a 3/5 and 5/5, with 16% rating it as a 1/5 or 2/5. Importantly, almost all young people stated that they had an adult in their life that they could trust. When care leavers were asked the same question regarding their overall experience of their leaving care support all rated this somewhere between 3/5 and 5/5.

Recommendations

1. Review how the New to Care Packs are distributed to children and young people to ensure that they have access to information when they first come into care.
2. Work to be considered around introducing a children's agreement that Social Worker's could use with children and young people to outline frequency of contact between the Social Worker and the child, a clear message that children can talk to their Social Worker if they are unhappy and how any future changes of workers

would be managed. Consideration could be given to this being linked to the new Guarantee for Children and Young People in Care.

3. Re-launch of the Social Work Contact Cards to ensure that all children and young people in care know how to contact their Social Worker and who to contact in their absence. Despite high numbers of young people reporting that they do know this, the City of York Council would further demonstrate its ambition by ensuring that every child or young person has this basic information.
4. Work to be undertaken to ensure that children and young people have better access to written information about their placements prior to a placement move.
5. An increased emphasis on IROs meeting with children and young people before their reviews and work to be undertaken to further promote children and young people's involvement in their reviews.
6. Work to be undertaken by the Virtual School to promote more engagement of children and young people in their Personal Education Plans.
7. Consideration to be given as to whether there is anything further that can be done to improve children and young people's experience of having a Health Assessment.

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