

# YORK'S CHILDREN IN CARE COUNCIL AND CARE LEAVERS FORUM

APRIL 2018 – MARCH 2019

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## INTRODUCTION

Participation arrangements for children and young people in care in York are organized under the Children in Care Council (Show Me That I Matter panel and Speak Up Youth group) and our Care leavers Forum (I Still Matter). This includes monthly Show Me That I Matter panel meetings (13-17 yrs), monthly meetings of the Care leavers Forum, I Still Matter, (17-24 yrs) and fortnightly Speak Up youth club sessions (10-16yrs). The purpose of these groups is to enable care experienced young people the opportunity to raise and discuss issues that are important to them, whilst helping to shape and improve services in York. SMTIM and ISM members are financially rewarded for their contribution and this is operated using a stamp system in which young people receive a £20 cash reward for attending 3 sessions.

The aim of this report is to detail the activity of the CiCC and highlight the issues identified by young people between April 2018 and March 2019. The report will look in depth at all three strands of York's Children in Care Council; providing information on the range of different projects each group has been involved with during this period and detailing how particular issues have been addressed.

## STRUCTURE

### SHOW ME THAT I MATTER

SMTIM currently consists of 9 young people in care aged 13-16 years. SMTIM meetings are held monthly and key decision makers (elected members and senior council officers) are invited to attend every third meeting to enable young people to feedback on the work they have been doing and help to change and shape services in York. In between professional meetings, SMTIM are able to explore and discuss issues in depth and take part in more focused work before feeding back their thoughts to decision makers. In addition to this, young people regularly invite and are consulted by professionals and other agencies to discuss a range of issues and to provide insight on service provisions for children and young people in care.

### SPEAK UP YOUTH

Speak Up Youth was formed in September 2017 after All Together Active (ATA) and I Matter 2 merged together. Speak Up Youth meets fortnightly at Moor Lane Youth Centre and is aimed at children and young people aged 10-16 years and up to 19 years for those with additional needs. The group is currently made up of 11 young people aged 10-19 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, sociable environment with other care experienced young people. Issues raised by Speak Up Youth are shared with the SMTIM panel to take forward to senior

managers and elected members during their quarterly meetings. It should be noted that the participation carried out by this group is less frequent due to the informal nature of the group. Young people are encouraged to take part in consultations alongside accessing the group for recreational purposes.

#### I STILL MATTER

I Still Matter is York's Care Leavers Forum and is aimed at care leavers and young people aged 17- 24 years, as well as young people who are approaching the transition to leaving care. ISM currently consists of 8 members aged 18-22 years, and is delivered by staff from the Speak Up Service and members of the Pathway Team. The panel meets on a monthly basis at West Offices and enables young people to identify and discuss any key issues significant to Care Leaver's in York. In line with the SMTIM's meeting structure, meetings with Elected Members and Senior Council Officers are held on a quarterly basis. During these meetings, ISM is able to feedback any issues with the aim of helping to change and shape services for care leavers in York.

#### OVERVIEW

Between April 2018 and March 2019, a total of 28 children and young people, aged between 10-21 years, have been involved in the Children in Care Council and Care leavers Forum. Out of these 28 young people, 14 were male and 14 were female, 3 had an Educational Health Care Plan and a further 6 were in receipt of other SEN services.

In the twelve month period, the 3 groups together have conducted 11 panel meetings, 4 of which were formal panel meetings, 14 youth group sessions, and 1 social event. In addition to this, CiCC members have taken part in interview panels, attended an awards ceremony, attended a regional residential and have presented at conferences and training sessions. There have been a total of 10 key issues raised between the groups, including education and employment, financial support, placement issues, care leavers as parents, improving mental health support and respecting cultural and religious views.

#### CONTACT WITH PROFESSIONALS

The Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum have worked with a number of different professionals over the last twelve months. Three identified elected members and senior managers attend SMTIM and ISM every quarter, to ensure that decision makers can regularly hear directly from young people. In addition to this, various professional are invited by young people to attend and respond to any issues raised. Professionals also regularly approach the group to ask if they would like to be involved in various pieces of consultation.

## OVERVIEW OF THE PROFESSIONALS THAT HAVE ATTENDED

Professionals	When	Which group
Claire Mo, Cath Short and Emily Wood – Permanence Team	March 2018	SMTIM
Jon Stonehouse - DCS	April 2018	SMTIM
Cllr Runciman and Michelle Porter -	May 2018	SMTIM
David Purcell – Pathway , Cllr Crawshaw, Cllr Rawlings.	May 2018	ISM
Cath Murray and Jenny Pavis – Complaints Team	June 2018	SMTIM
Cllr Rawlings, Cllr Crawshaw and Jon Stonehouse - DCS	July 2018	SMTIM
Jill Langdale and Helen McGahan - ETE, Pathway	Sept 2018	ISM
James Lee - Assessing Permanent Carers Team	Nov 2018	SMTIM
Karron Young, Gill Clapham, Phil Taylor – Virtual School, Julia Massey and Melody Hardcastle.	Dec 2018	SMTIM
Sophie Wales - AD, Sophie Keeble - Group Manager, Cllr Runciman and Cllr Crawshaw	Jan 2019	SMTIM/ISM
Rachel Duffield – Virtual School and Anna Fitzgerald – Health	Feb 2019	SMTIM
Jill Langdale -ETE Pathway	March 2019	SMTIM
Alison Cammiss and Sara Sherwood – CSE and Missing	March 2019	SUY

## ISSUES RAISED AND WORK CARRIED OUT

## KEY ISSUES RAISED - ISM

**Perception of care leavers who are parents** – Members of ISM raised some of the issues care leavers can experience as parents. Some members felt that there can be a negative perception of care leavers who are parents, and shared their negative experiences of being ‘judged’ or feelings of being “singled out’ by professionals. As a result of these discussions, professionals from the Healthy Child Service and the Midwifery Service were invited to attend ISM to listen to the views of the group, and to consider if there is anything their services can do to address these issues.

**Difficulties in understanding letters sent by housing and council tax** - Members of ISM raised the issue that they often find it difficult to understand information sent in the post by housing. As a result of this, ISM have been working together with Pathways to create a document, based on an example letter which will help explain elements of a typical letter and breakdown the common terms used. Once

completed, ISM and Pathways have agreed this will be added to the accommodation section on the SMTIM/ISM website for other young people to access.

**Mental health and emotional wellbeing** – Young people highlighted the need for opportunities to be made available to both professionals (including foster carers) and young people to develop their knowledge of mental health and emotional wellbeing. Young people also stated that information about counselling should more readily available and expressed an interest in carrying out a project to promote 30 Clarence Street, a service for young people in York.

**Understanding cultural needs** – Young people discussed the importance of professionals having a good understanding of a young person's cultural needs when placement planning and the importance of avoiding assumptions. As a result of raising these concerns, ISM would like to develop a resource which can be shared with foster carers around understanding and respecting cultural and religious views. One member of ISM is also working on developing a leaflet for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children outlining young people's rights and helping to define common terms used in social care.

**Breakfast for care leavers** – Following the success of York's Civic Breakfast, young people discussed the idea of a similar breakfast for care leavers hosted at the Mansion House. The focus of this breakfast would be on how businesses and organizations in York can support care leavers. This would include having the opportunity to meet with organizations across the city with the aim of considering their education and employment options. Although no decisions have been confirmed, as a result of these discussions, conversations have taken place to discuss whether this could take place.

#### WORK CARRIED OUT ISM

**Accommodation leaflet** - After identifying the need for extra support for Care leavers who are moving into independence, ISM helped to write and design an accommodation leaflet for the Pathway Service. This leaflet provides Care leavers with useful information on living independently including; a moving in checklist, Care Leaver's entitlements, helpful tips, and a list of useful contact numbers. This leaflet will be shared by the Pathway team with any care leaver moving into independent living.

**Local Offer for care leavers** - Members of ISM have also been involved in the launch of the City of York's Council's Local Offer for care leavers. The Local offer was written and designed together by I Still Matter and York's Pathway team and outlines the help and support available to care leavers in the City of York.

## KEY ISSUES RAISED BY SMTIM

**Mental health and emotional wellbeing** – Young people raised the issue of mental health support in schools, with some noting a difference in the support available when placed out of area. Discussions also took place around the length of waiting lists for services such as CAMHS, and young people highlighted the need for further mental health and emotional wellbeing support in schools. Young people also expressed the need for better mental health training for foster carers to prevent the breakdown of placements.

**Education** – Young people raised the question of whether supply teachers are made aware when a student is in care. Some members explained that when supply teachers are not aware of this, it can result in the inability to fully support or recognise the difficulties faced by young people. As a result of raising these concerns, this was shared with Rachel Duffield (Virtual School Well-being Worker) who subsequently visited SMTIM to collect their views on how this could be improved.

**Peer support** – One member identified the need for a peer buddying system for children and young people in care, expressing that young people are not always able to open up to professionals and noted the difference this could make to young people first coming into care.

**Foster Placements** - Some members discussed experiences of foster placements and stressed the importance of privacy for young people. Some young people felt that their privacy isn't always respected during foster placements and accessing their bedrooms without permission can feel intrusive. This also led to the discussion of foster carers packing young people's belongings during a placement move, which young people felt was inappropriate. As a result of these concerns, this was followed up at a future meeting and the Assistant Director of Children Specialists Services was notified, as well as being taken forwards as a consideration when recruiting foster carers.

## WORK CARRIED OUT SMTIM

**You Are Not Alone Booklet** - The You Are Not Alone Booklet was launched during 2018 and is a booklet put together by Show Me That I Matter for other young people in care. This booklet contains important messages that SMTIM wanted to share to remind young people that 'they are not alone' as well as suggesting who you might talk to if you were experiencing some difficult feelings. This year, The You Are Not Alone Booklet has been shared with the Corporate Parenting Board, Strategic Partners, been included in the new to care packs for young people, been promoted in the SMTIM newsletter and been circulated as part of training events.

**Social Worker's profile** - Members of SMTIM have been working to create team profiles for Social Workers in the Permanence Team. This was in response to young

people saying that they would like to like improve their relationships with their workers and encourage better communication .This is an ongoing piece of work and will shortly be available for use in the permanence team.

**Foster Carer recruitment** - SMTIM met with members of the fostering team to look at how to better involve young people in the recruitment and training of foster carers. SMTIM also met with the Assessing Permanence Team to discuss how young people can inform the assessment process when recruiting foster carers.

**Virtual School** - SMTIM met with members of the Virtual School to talk about how schools can better support children and young people in care. In addition to this, a member of SMTIM has been named the lead person to take forward any issues in relation to education and will work with the Virtual School to create resources and attend future Designated Teacher Network meetings in order to feed in young people's views.

**IV leaflet** - Members of SMTIM were consulted in the creation of the Independent Visitor Scheme leaflet for children and young people in care.

#### COLLABORATIVE WORK – SMTIM/ISM

**York Human Rights City** - Members from SMTIM and I Still Matter have worked together with York's Human Rights City and York Youth Council to create a Young Person's Indicator Report, which will outline and provide research on the top priorities for young people in York helping to promote awareness. This piece of work is ongoing.

**The TACT project** - Show Me That I Matter, I Still Matter and Speak Up Youth were consulted by TACT (The Adolescent and Children's Trust) in order to devise a new universal dictionary of care. Members of Show Me That I Matter and Speak Up Youth gave their thoughts on the language frequently used by professionals when talking about being in care. This information was combined with feedback received from other children in care councils across a variety of other local authorities and used to create a new dictionary of care which will be shared with professionals across the country.

**Fostering home assessment toolkit** - As a result of young people wanting to more involvement in fostering recruitment, members of SMTIM and ISM have been working together with the Fostering team to create a Foster Home Assessment toolkit. The purpose of the toolkit is to ensure that the voices of care experienced young people are heard through the fostering assessment process. During the process the young panel member along with the Assessing Fostering worker will identify up to 12 questions to discuss as part of the home visit. The feedback

provided by young people will help the Fostering team to identify any areas where potential foster carers may need extra support, information or training. This project is still in its pilot stage and will be launched shortly.

**Foster Carer Recruitment Campaign** - I Still Matter and Speak Up Youth took part in City of York Councils Foster Carer recruitment campaign. Speak Up youth provided quotes to explain how their foster carers had made a difference to them and I Still Matter contributed to the interviews and provided sound bytes for the social media release.

**Review toolkit** – SMTIM and ISM were able to input their views on the Review Toolkit which will aid young people’s participation within their reviews.

**Complaints Leaflet** – SMTIM and ISM were consulted on the new design of the complaints leaflet for young people.

#### CONSULTATION WITH SPEAK UP YOUTH

**Missing Consultation** - Speak Up Youth took part in a consultation surrounding the missing process for children and young people in care and were able to share how they think return interviews could be improved.

#### ADDITIONAL CICC ACTIVITY 2018-19

##### CICC REGIONAL EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

**Yorkshire and Humber Regional Children in Care Council** - Show Me That I Matter has continued to be proactive in representing York at regional events at Wakefield, Sheffield and Leeds.

**ADCS Conference 2018** - Two members of ISM were invited to present at the Association of Directors of Children’s Services Conference in Manchester in July 2018, during which decision makers from across the country came together to discuss the improvements that could be made to the services for young people. I Still Matter members were able to successfully deliver some important messages regarding young people in care to around 250 people, including Ofsted member’s, Government Officials and Directors.



**Virtual School Next Steps Summer Programme** - In August 2018 members of SMTIM attended the Next Steps summer programme. This programme was an opportunity for young people to learn more about their career options and receive additional information and advice. Young people had the opportunity to visit Askham Bryan College, John Lewis, and attend a session at Moor Lane Youth Centre which included CV writing and the opportunity to talk to Learning and Work Advisor about their future prospects.

#### WHITEHALL TAKEOVER 2018

This year three members of Show Me That I Matter took part in the Children's Commissioner's Takeover Challenge and had the opportunity to visit Whitehall. The Takeover Challenge puts young people in decision-making positions and encourages organizations and businesses to hear their views. This year young people has the opportunity to shadow Jonathan Slater (Department of Education), Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth (Ministry of Housing) and Sir Simon McDonald (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

#### NORTH YORKSHIRE YOUNG MINDS COMBINED

Representatives from Show Me That I Matter have been a part of 'North Yorkshire Young Minds Combined' - a project group with representatives from various youth groups across York and North Yorkshire. The purpose of this project was for young people to come together to discuss how mental health services can be improved and as a result young people are planning an event to bring together various professionals and organizations from across York/North Yorkshire to discuss how mental health provisions for young people can be improved.

#### AWARDS CEREMONIES

**Shine Awards** - After identifying the need for a voice and participation award earlier this year, members of Show Me That I Matter and I Still Matter were nominated and awarded for their contribution and involvement in Voice and Participation in the City of York.

#### INTERVIEW PANELS

The demand for young person's interviews has continued throughout 2018-2019, with young people sitting on 15 interview panels for various roles within Children's Services including the Director of Children's Services, the Assistant Director for Children's Services, the Virtual Head Teacher, Learning and Wellbeing Worker within the Virtual School, Senior Social Workers, Newly Qualified Social Workers,

Assessment and Contact Workers, Independent Visitors and an Advocacy and Participation Worker.

## TRAINING

The Speak Up and Hear My Voice training was developed in 2015, as 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". 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.

The success of this training has continued through 2018-19, with 3 training sessions being delivered. During these sessions, young people were supported to deliver training sessions to Social Worker Students at the University of York, Independent Visitors and Designated Teachers. In addition to this, young people have been supported to deliver training to aspiring foster carers, via the Skills to Foster training, during which representatives from SMTIM and ISM talk about experiences of care and the transition to leaving care.

## SUMMARY

To conclude, York's Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum have achieved a huge amount within the last twelve months. This has been achieved with their continuous hard work and commitment to improving services for children and young people in care and care leavers in York. The effects of the projects young people have been involved in throughout 2018-19 demonstrate the value of the CiCC and the difference participation provisions can make to both young people and services. Their continued invites to attend events, conduct training and the awards and recognition received highlights how York's CiCC work is respected locally, regionally and nationally.