

MEETING:	Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee
MEETING DATE:	1 October 2014
TITLE OF REPORT:	Children in Care Council
REPORT BY:	Head of Looked After Children and Young People

Classification

Open

Key Decision

This is not an executive decision.

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

This report will provide evidence of progress made by the council in establishing an effective Children in Care Council.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the council's approach to developing the Children in Care Council and make recommendations for further development.**

Alternative options

- 1 No alternative options listed as this is a report to enable the committee to scrutinize the approach and make recommendations.

Reasons for recommendations

- 2 So that officers can build on the approach already being taken and make improvements that will benefit all children in care. Scrutiny will also enable the council to assure itself that the implementation of the Act is being carried out effectively.

Key considerations

- 3 The priorities for the participation team are to ask our looked after children and young people: what works, what doesn't work and what could work better, and most importantly involve them on an on-going basis, in the design, delivery and evaluation of services in Herefordshire. Alongside Herefordshire's Children and Young Peoples Partnership, the participation team wants to work towards Eileen Munro's vision; to ensure that Herefordshire Council can proudly say "we know our children and young people, we know their journey and we know what they need, because we have listened to them and learnt lessons.
- 4 **Projects that have already started:**
- 5 The focus of looked after children's participation has moved from its old home at Centre 18 to No4 – a building in Blackfriars Street. The redesign of the building from an office space to a base where young people can develop life skills and have a safe place to talk with friends was led by a group of young people.
- 6 The Children in Care Council has been re-launched and meets every month. It is working towards becoming a constituted group which will enable them to draw down funding in their own right.
- 7 Children and young people are regularly meeting with elected members to tell them their priorities.
- 8 The 11-18 Fun Club has continued to go from strength to strength and runs every fortnight; holding monthly trips.
- 9 A young person has sent a funding application to Starbucks to kick-start a youth club for 18+ as she identified the lack of activities for 18+. Unfortunately she was unsuccessful, however young people are being trained and DBS checked in preparation for them to participate in the 18+ group.
- 10 The STEPS one-to-one support service has continued to be a valuable resource for looked after children and young people. Furthermore; in response to Herefordshire's staying put initiative, the STEPS age range has extended. It is hoped that our care leavers will train to become STEPS workers.
- 11 The celebration event will occur this year; and plans are being made to make this year the best ever! This will be overseen by the Children in Care Council as this event is one of its priorities.

- 12 A young person has put together a business plan to support looked after children and young people going abroad. This is another priority of the Children in Care Council.
- 13 The Rural Media Company film project ran every Monday and was amazing; we had a group of between 8 to 12 young people who created a great short film targeting an issue that they face in their everyday life. The film premier was on 8 May 2014 and has been cascaded throughout the local authority and promoted to outside agencies in order to tackle the issue dealt with in the film.
- 14 Six looked after children and young people participated in a recent research project run by public health. All children and young people received a piece for their CV as a result of participating.
- 15 Four looked after children and young people participated in a 'shape ur service' discussion with CLD youth counselling, to support them to make their service better for young people. This project developed into the young people having the opportunity to support CLD and CAMHS to apply for a bid to improve access to services in Herefordshire.
- 16 Young people's interview panels are being used within the local authority and have been involved in recruiting staff including an assistant director, head of service and newly qualified social workers.
- 17 The 7-11 youth club has restarted.
- 18 A health and well-being programme- called 'Girls Night In,' has been piloted as a multi-agency initiative (health, education, CLD and participation team) for young people. The follow up sessions, requested by the young people involved took place. A 'Boys Night In' is due to take place in October 2014.
- 19 Four fully funded places were secured with YHA summer camps, one of which was on a future leader summer camp and were taken up by looked after children and care leavers.
- 20 Work experience placements are offered for looked after children, young people and care leavers in conjunction with their aspirations.
- 21 The achievements of some of Herefordshire's most vulnerable young people were celebrated at a recent summer fete. The fete, organised by Herefordshire's Children in Care Council and Herefordshire Council, was organised to give children and young people who are looked after by the council a day of fun activities and celebrations. On the day, Councillor Jeremy Millar and Jo Davidson officially signed the council's pledge to all looked after children in Herefordshire. Monies raised from the fete will go towards children in care priorities.
- 22 The Children in Care Council sit in on 'Voice of the Child' meetings and the Corporate Parenting Panel.
- 23 In development:**
- 24 One of our young people wishes to create a grief programme tailored to the needs of looked after children and young people and is now in touch with Phoenix Bereavement Trust to start her training.
- 25 One to one sessions are occurring to support looked after children and young people

to gain valuable skills for life. For example; when meeting with the participation team, children and young people have to be on time, reliable and so on.

- 26 No4 website for our children and young people (a Children in Care Council priority) developed for our children and young people by our children and young people. Our young people have met with a member of the council's design team and fed in their ideas and we are due to meet again once our young people have decided what they want to say on the web site (in partnership with professionals).
- 27 Peer mentor programme to be piloted with 16 plus children and young people
- 28 Training programme for our care leavers on how to:
- Manage interviewing social workers and other social care staff,
 - Train social workers and other social care staff to hear the voice of the child, and more importantly
 - Train other Looked After Children and Care Leavers to be competent in the above so that the process can continue into the future.

The following projects will be launched in the next 12 months:

- Pack a Tack initiative re-started (Children in Care Council Priority)
- Care to cook programme to be re-launched in partnership with health
- Leaflets to be developed for our looked after children and young people
- Links to be made between the Children In Care Council (CICC) and the Virtual Shadow Board – in partnership with HVOSS (Herefordshire Voluntary Organisations Support Service).
- Internship to be created for care leavers
- Young inspectors programme
- Peer advocacy with NYAS (National Youth Advisory Service)
- 18+ group is due to start late 2014/early 2015 and this will be run by Care Leaver Champions.

Community impact

- 29 The purpose and function of the New Belongings/ Care 2 Work is to implement the access all areas guidance that aims to prevent care leavers having additional barriers put in front of them due to them being care leavers. It is also highlighting the isolation and feeling of not belonging to local communities these sentiments were echoed in the new belonging questionnaire completed in September 2013. The care champions role has been developed as part of this project which has included working alongside the children in care council.
- 30 Whilst Understanding Herefordshire identifies a low number of care leavers who are not in education, employment or training, national and local evidence shows that over the age of 18, care leavers are more likely to be unemployed, in very low wage roles,

or in poor housing due to the additional barriers they face.

Equality and human rights

- 31 Different aspects of the implementation of the Act will pay due regard to our public sector equality duty as set out below:

Note: Under Section 149, the "General Duty" on public authorities is set out thus:

"A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct ... prohibited by or under this Act;

advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it."

- 32 This report has a really positive impact as it demonstrates that the councils is paying due regard by supporting and providing opportunities through this work to foster good relations and advance equality of opportunity for this cohort.

Financial implications

- 33 The council currently supports the Children in Care Council and resources developments such as Pack a Tack and the celebration event. The council is also encouraging and supporting the Children in Care Council to raise some funding themselves to contribute to the costs of activities such as overseas trips, and to bid for funds from other organisations.

Legal implications

- 34 The role of the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to ensure accountability and transparency of the council's decision making process and to review and scrutinise actions and decisions in relation to children and adult safeguarding; and social care functions in relation to children. The Committee has the power to make reports and recommendations in relation on the matters outlined in this report.

- 35 There are no legal implications.

Risk management

- 36 The main risks which exist are:

- The Children in Care Council fails to get good engagement from children in care and therefore fails to meet its objectives.
- The council and its partners fail to recognise the importance of the Children in Care Council and therefore impact negatively on the achievement of its objectives.

Consultees

None

Appendices (To Follow)

Appendix 1: Voice of the Child action plan

Appendix 2: Peer Support Plan

Background papers

- None identified.