

London Borough of Enfield

Children & Young Peoples Scrutiny
8th March 2022

Subject: Looked After Children and Leaving Care Participation, Consultation and Engagement of Young People who are Looked After and Care Leavers in Enfield

Cabinet Member: Councillor Uddin
Executive Director: Tony Theodoulou

Purpose of Report

1. This report is provided for information purposes to update the Scrutiny Panel on the work the Looked After Children and Care Leaving Service has undertaken. It outlines how the service is strengthened by new guidance on youth participation across all Enfield's children's services to hear the voice of the child as corporate parents so that it informs, shapes and improves service delivery through consultation, co-production, participation and engagement.

Relevance to the Council Plan

2. Empowering Young Enfield - Part of priority 1 of our Children and Young People's Plan, and priority 2 of the Council Plan. Part of the Looked after Children and Care Leaver Strategy. Part of the principle of corporate parenting.

Background

3. Looked after Children and Care Leaving Services has always been part of the role of the corporate parent putting consultation, participation and the voice of the children and young people at the heart of our children's care. With all looked after children being part of the decision-making process, this provides them with the skills, knowledge and correct information so that they understand their rights and are able to voice their views and shape their future. This is done in a variety of ways within Looked After Children, Leaving Care Services and Fostering, through Looked After Children reviews with the Independent Reviewing Officers, the Virtual School, Health, the Children in Care Council (KRATOS) and through children and young people being part of the corporate parenting board which holds us all to account and scrutinises the outcomes of Looked After Children & Leaving Care in relation to their care, education, health and mental health.

Main Considerations for the Panel

4. The information below is provided for the Scrutiny Panel to see how participation, consultation and engagement is central to Enfield as corporate parents and how this shapes the lives for our young people with a culture of transparency and accountability, with the view that we have to future proof today to secure tomorrow for vulnerable children in our care, with a focus on listening and doing (You said, We did). We are continuously reviewing how we do this and keeping at the forefront of our minds *“Would this be good enough for my child?”* which is summarised in the conclusion/next steps.

KRATOS (Children in Care Council)



KRATOS is Enfield's Children in Care Council where young people in care come together to feedback to the Participation and Consultation Officer (managed by the Head of Corporate Parenting) to shape their services as looked after children and care leavers to Enfield. The name KRATOS was chosen by them, and means 'Power, Strength.' KRATOS takes part in activities, trips and educational opportunities. They take part in consultations to ensure that we are informed of their views, which shapes service delivery. KRATOS is separated into two groups; under 16s and over 16's and takes place every other week. We now hope that this will take place at the new Youth Centre. Both groups meet to share ideas, attend focused workshops e.g., money management, and discuss future projects, which is facilitated by the Consultation and Participation Officer.

Between 2018-2020 looked after children and care leavers were consulted, and through co-production shaped services by being involved with 15 plans, strategies and projects such as the SEN Strategy, Looked After Children & Leaving Care Strategy, Vulnerable Persons Strategy, Homeless & Housing Strategy, Health Passports, Independent Reviewing Officer Strategic Priorities, Children & Young Peoples family plans, Poverty and Inequality Commission, Leaving Care Local Offer, Youth Empowerment Strategy, the design of the Enfield Care Leavers Hub, part of the process of appointing the new Consultation and Participation Officer, the Care Leavers Pledge (see below) which was co-produced, appointing the Director of Children's Services and design of the Children's portal.

Enfield's Pledge to Care Leavers

Enfield's original Pledge to Care Leavers has been updated following consultation with 73 Enfield Care Leavers during the Care Leavers Celebration Event held in October 2019.

We welcome the clear statement from the Care Leavers who attended the event on the things which are most important to improve the experience of children in care and care experience to people.

Specifically, we pledge, in our written policies, procedures and practices, to take clear steps to ensure that all the services we deliver will demonstrably:

1. Promote more love in the care system including displays of positive physical affections;
2. Ensure care experienced people are regarded and treated as individuals worthy of respect and to promote that respect whenever we can, regardless of any discriminatory factor i.e. disability;
3. Ensure that relationships are seen as central to all our policies and procedures to support children in care and care experienced people;
4. Take clear steps to improve stability and continuity in the lived experiences of people in care;
5. Emphasise the importance of working with our partners and young people to raise awareness of need and improve support for the mental health and well-being of children in care and care experienced people in our local area;
6. Recognise in our daily work that the impact of care experienced does not end at 18 or 21 or even 25. We will engage with you, seek your views and review our practice to remove age restrictions on support wherever we can;
7. Protect, promote and where necessary rebuild family and community connections and help those young people for whom we are responsible to understand their personal history;
8. Make sure that young people in our care are routinely engaged, consulted and have a real say in their own lives prior to decisions being made (whenever possible) and provide them with opportunities for growth i.e. sporting activities, careers support.
9. Ensure that young people in our care are properly and fully informed of their rights and responsibilities and offer advocacy to ensure they receive them; and
10. Listen to the voice of children in care and care experienced people of all ages and always consult them about changes to services and support.

Examples of looked after children & leaving care consultation and participation in 2021 includes:

- During mental Health Week 2021, KRATOS took part in a film "How are you?" which focused on how the pandemic affected young people's mental health.
- One care leaver has been accepted on the Home Office board for Borders, Immigration and Citizenship. This is a fantastic opportunity for young people to shape service delivery on a national and international level.
- One of the care leavers is now part of the Peer Power scheme (which is a paid role), where they share their experiences of being in care and being in a secure setting in relation to mental health.
- KRATOS were involved in the co-production of the children's contextual safeguarding film for Enfield children.
- KRATOS are part of Enfield's Youth Parliament and part of the film produced during Mental Health Awareness week to tackle the stigma in relation to mental health.
- Two care leavers now have the level 2 Youth Worker qualification.

- One care leaver is now trained as a Young Inspector and completed a mock inspection of another Local Authority.
- Care leavers have taken part in the consultation process for the Enfield Children and Young Peoples Plan - Empowering Young Enfield and the youth participation guidance across all services for children in Enfield.
- Consultation on the independent living workshop training for care leavers, before being presented to Housing Panel.
- KRATOS were interviewed by the Learning and Work Institute and shared their thoughts and experiences of the Welfare system.
- Care leavers and looked after children continue to be the part of the pan London Children in Care Council, ensuring Enfield is represented and part of the different focus groups which shape the national picture for looked after children and care leavers.
- Took part in National Care Leaver week.
- Attended Scrutiny when the Empowering Young Enfield Children's Plan was presented.
- Part of the mock in house inspection of the Care Leaving Service.
- Looked after children & care leavers took part in the independent review of Social Care.
- Attended the annual Social Care Conference.

Looked After Children, Leaving Care and Foster Carers

Through a variety of different ways Social Workers listen daily to the voice of the child, which is pivotal to their care planning and is central to the direct work they do with children and young people, to ensure that they are part of the decision-making process and their care plan. Below lists a variety of different ways the voice of the child is heard and used to improve service delivery:

- Looked After Children Reviews
- Gathering views through home visits
- Life Story work to inform care plans
- Having an advocate through Barnardo's
- Independent visitors
- Fostering send feedback forms to children and young people's Social Worker so that they can obtain feedback for foster carer reviews, to review practices and improve the care experience of children and young people in care. It also identifies any support foster carers may need to better equip them to provide better care for our children and young people.
- The Access to Resources and Integrated Services team conduct an annual survey to young people in semi-independent provision to find out if they feel happy and safe in their current placement. As a result, the Access to Resources and Integrated Services team give direct feedback to providers to improve the accommodation, which helps us to support our young people
- Pathway Plans are completed with the young person
- Staying put placement reviews are expected to have the young person actively participating in them.
- Through multi professional panels (like the Not In Education and Employment Training Panel). In the case of the Housing Nomination Panel the young person is invited to attend online/in person to support their nomination to the panel as well as to answer their queries.

- Through the information and complaint service which is available to young people.
- Through the professional network (when care leavers at times are not engaging with their allocated worker but they do with someone from their professional network who may speak on their behalf, this may be the allocated key worker at their placement).

Education and Health

Education is key to ensuring our young people leave school with the skills and essential qualifications they need in life to succeed. If young people are unhappy at school, or are struggling to succeed, this is captured through the Personal Education Plan which takes place three times a year and is also an opportunity for children to share their wishes and feelings each term (which we adapted during Covid to clearly see how we could improve our support – See Appendix 1).

The wishes and feeling Personal Education Plan highlighted to us the experiences of looked after children during the spring and summer lockdowns which in turn enabled us to tailor the support for young people and led to the development of a transition plan to ensure a supported return to school and good attendance.

Within the Health Team, the Looked After Children’s Nurse supports young people with health information, health questionnaires and passports for example, looked after children’s views on health assessments explores if they feel safe. During the summer holidays the Virtual School Headteacher and English for Speakers of Other Languages teacher hold English language lessons to equip learners to express their feelings and mental health needs. In Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services through participation groups and questionnaires that were sent out by the Participation and Consultation Officers, we have adapted services especially for 18+ to follow a social psychological model though drop in’s at the Hub, home visits, following a more informal model.



You said

We want to help design the Care Leavers Hub



We did

We had a working party on this and care leavers were part of the launch.



You said

As Care leavers we want support with mental health, welfare and financial entitlement, sexual health service and access to employment.



We did

These sessions are part of the care leavers Hub with a weekly timetable of sharing sessions taking place. We now have 18+ CAMHs therapist who spends every Thursday in the Hub for drop-in sessions.



You said

We want swimming lessons.



We did

Enfield Swimming Club deliver weekly swimming lessons every Friday for looked after children aged 7-9.



You said

KRATOS to have a takeover session at Corporate Parenting including a workshop on apprenticeships and how they could be introduced for Enfield care leavers.



We did

We now have four leaving care apprenticeships.

Conclusions – Next Steps

5. In summary this report demonstrates the variety of ways in which we position the voice of the child centrally to the service which we provide in Social Care as corporate parents. However, we believe in Enfield that we can further enhance this service by sharing the good practise of Looked After Children, Leaving Care, Cheviots and other services in Education and Social Care. In light of this as Head of corporate parenting I am the nominated lead for the council's guidance on youth participation. The purpose of the guidance is to support the inclusion of children and young people in consistent and meaningful consultation, engagement, and co-

production. This relates to the work of the council in the development of strategy, policy, campaigns, in service design and delivery with evaluation. The guidance will set out different approaches to youth participation, guiding principles, and practical considerations to support council officers to develop and deliver meaningful and effective youth participation activities. Youth participation will further support the work across all of Children and Family Services. It is also intended for this guidance to widen their input across the whole organisation and enhance the councils work for children and young people up to the age of 19, and 25 for care leavers with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Further guidance is also due to be developed in 2022, to enhance the inclusion of our families in consultation, engagement and co-production. The youth participation guidance is due in Spring 2022.

As corporate parents we have also reviewed the Corporate Parenting Board. The corporate parenting annual report summaries the reports shared at Corporate Parenting, which KRATOS will use to hold us to account and evaluate whether the improvement priorities set out in each officer's report has been achieved. This will take place during the takeover of the corporate parenting. In addition to the questionnaires we conduct, the following surveys will be given out to our young people at achievement day and care leavers conference (see Appendix 2 and 3) and via the Personal Education Plan (see Appendix 4) so we can annually benchmark ourselves, similarly to the survey commissioned by Bright Spots.

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Appendices

- Appendix 1 Wishes and Feelings PEP Report
- Appendix 2 Achievement Day Survey
- Appendix 3 Care Leavers Survey
- Appendix 4 Additional PEP 3 Questions

Background Papers